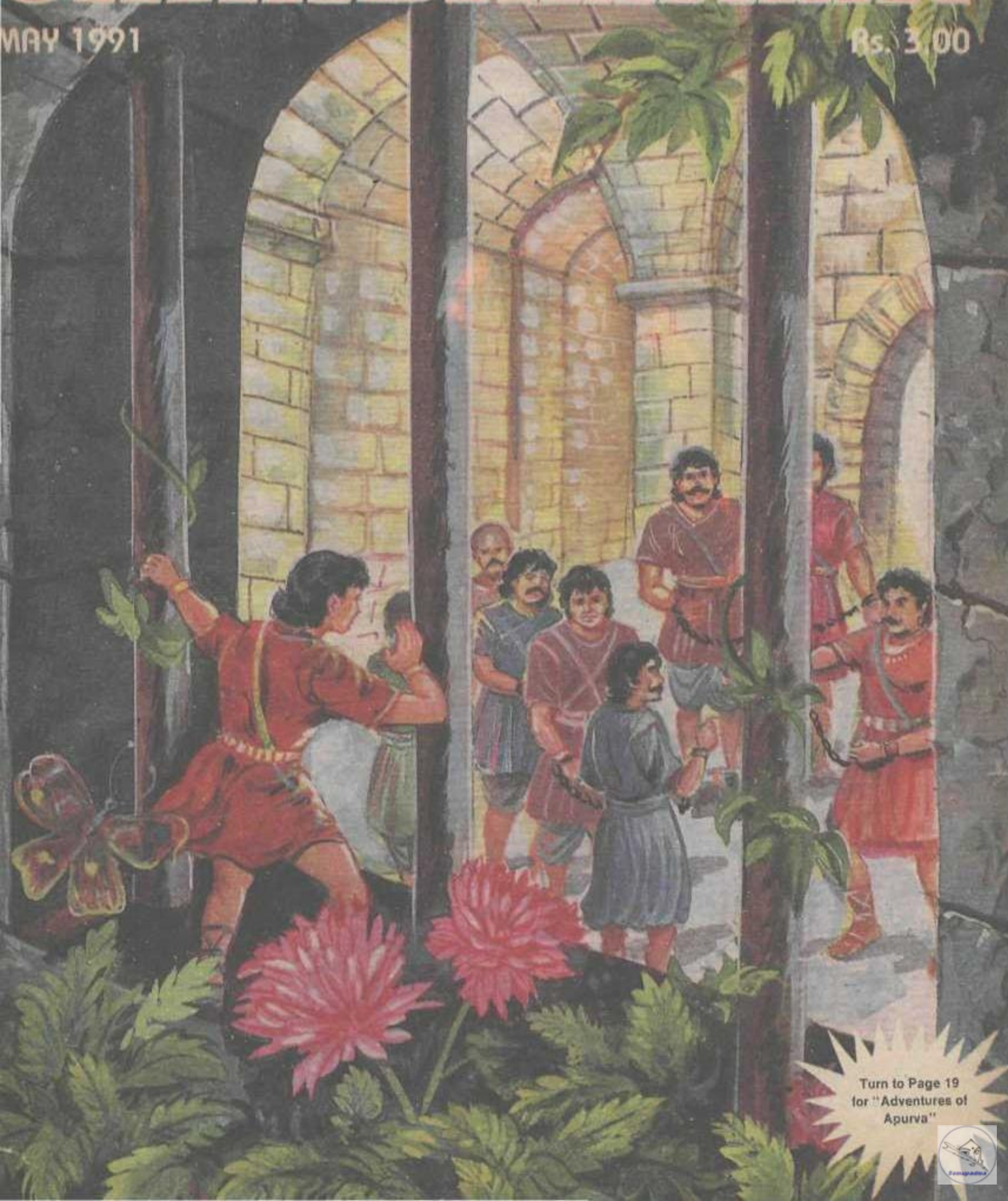


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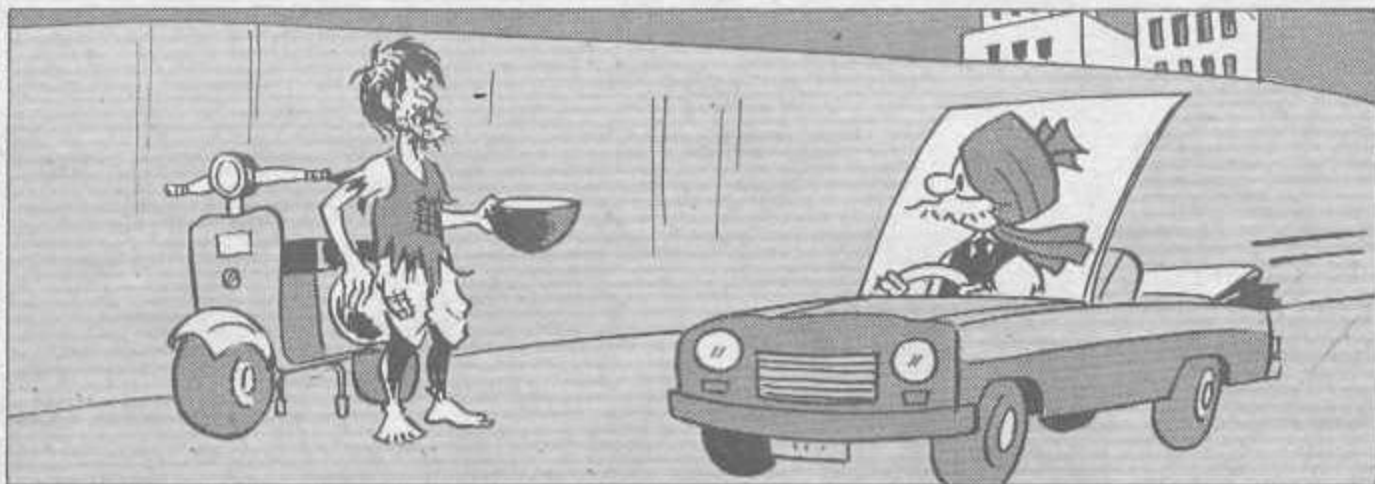
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The Mystery

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The Choudharys' child has disappeared. The Circus Crook has struck again! Who at the Circus is responsible? The BSA SLR Secret Seekers turn detectives and tackle a dangerous criminal.



It all happened on Priyanka's way home from school. Suddenly a red car stopped and pulled her in. And then she was in a dim candle lit room. She could hear animals growling. "Oh my, they sound like hungry lions" she thought.

The worried Choudharys receive a call at 8 p.m. "Do you want to see your daughter alive? On Sunday, 11.45 a.m., bring Rs. 2,50,000 to the circus. And wear a white suit," the villain roared hoarsely.

ENTER BSA SLR SECRET SEEKERS

FRIDAY: "Two days, in fact less than that," calculated Vipul. Idea!

"Why don't we check the place?" "Hey, let's go



on our BSA SLRs", added Ralph. Pitch dark ahead. A bump. A brake. The Secret Seekers pedal furiously on their BSA SLRs. Suddenly approaching footsteps.

"Quick, hide behind the wall" warned Pooja. "Come Sunday, Rs. 2,50,000 will be ours or else..." came the growling voice. And then, loud laughter. As the Secret Seekers came out of hiding they found a handkerchief with the letter 'J' on it. "Let's go. This could be the clue!" And they set on their BSA SLRs.

SATURDAY: 'J', whose hanky could this be and what's the connection? Will it lead us to

Priyanka?" wondered Vipul.

SUNDAY: A nervous Mr. Choudhary did the needful... white suit with Rs. 2,50,000. In crisp 100s. The Circus show began. Came the trapeze artistes and the joker with his funny tricks. Suddenly, the Secret Seekers saw a kerchief falling from the air. The same 'J' as on the kerchief found on Friday night.



The Secret Seekers shouted "Choudhary Uncle, do you see what we see? Quick, call the police. Go on your BSA SLR. Ask Inspector Uncle to come..."

The crook and his gang were caught. And Priyanka rescued. Thanks to Friday night's cycling trip on their BSA SLRs, when they found the vital clue that led to the crook.

Do you know him?

You'll get the Crook when you read The Mystery of the Mad Vassovich. So long... Happy cycling on your BSA SLRs.



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**And News Flash, Let Us Know
and More!**

NEXT ISSUE

Vol. 21 June 1991 No. 12.

PROVIDENCE PLAYS A ROLE: The bandits are led to the gallows. A remorseful Bhaloo Sardar pleads for his men. The Kotwal is firm. The noose tightens around Bhaloo's neck. One... Two... Three... the Kotwal counts. The rope snaps, not once but thrice. Is this the miracle they all awaited? A suspense-filled sequence in **ADVENTURES OF APURVA**.

The Vanaras are desperate. The time allotted to them to find Sita Devi is already over, and they are far from even a trace of her. Prince Angada is afraid of facing Sugriva with a report of failure. The other Vanaras prepare themselves for death along with Angada. Hanuman instils some hope and courage in them. The search continues in **VEER HANUMAN**.

Another thought-provoking story in the series **PANCHATANTRA**, brought to you in multi-colour drawings by the inimitable Bujjai.

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ILLITERACY

—The Fight Must Continue—

The year that was would be remembered in India as the Literacy Year, when everybody was seized of the low literacy rate in the country and decided that something should be done to make more people literate.

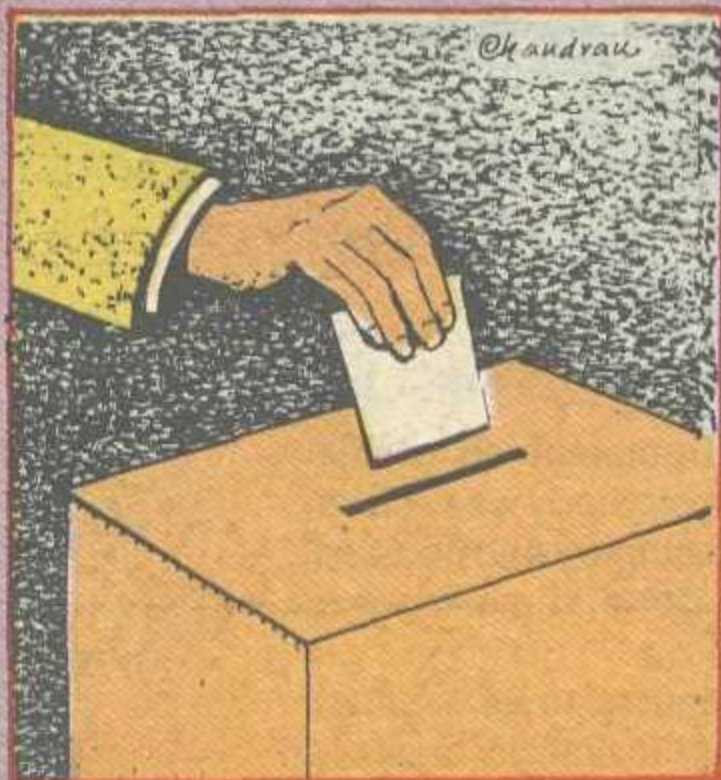
Among the few achievements can be counted that of Kottayam in Kerala as the first city to reach hundred per cent literacy, Ernakulam, in Kerala, as the first district to reach that distinction, followed by Minicoy, one of the Lakshadweep Islands which had close historical links with Kerala.

Now comes the heartening news that an area contiguous with Kerala has gained that coveted distinction in the first three months of the new year. The former French pocket of Mahe on the west coast has attained cent per cent literacy.

All this indicates that the entire southern part of the west coast is in the forefront of the fight to eradicate illiteracy. The fight must continue, even if it takes all the remaining years of the last decade of the fading century. With it should fade our stigma of illiteracy, too.



AYES FOR UNION



The people of the USSR were recently asked a question. And they were to give a one-word answer. An overwhelming majority said 'yes'. This happened when the country held its first ever 'referendum'.

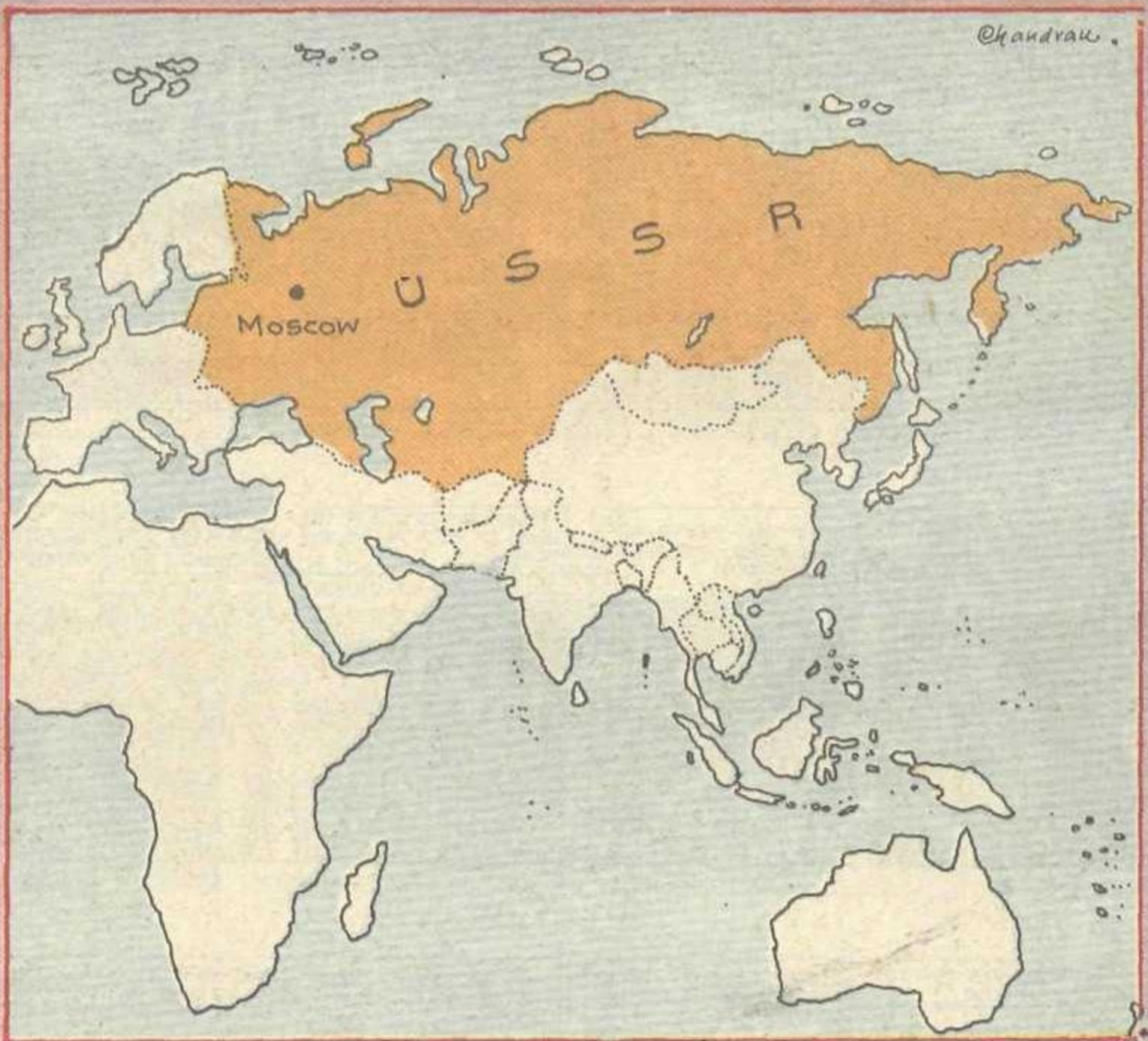
Literally, the word means 'that which is to be referred'. In modern times, it denotes a political measure, as opposed to a legislative measure which is normally the prerogative of the elected representatives of the people, known by the term 'initiative', meaning 'that which is to be initiated or introduced.' When a country wishes to know the

minds of the people directly and not through their representatives, it resorts to a referendum. The method adopted is to put a question to the voters and seek an answer through a ballot.

The question to the Soviet voter was: Do you agree to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics retaining its federal status in which all nationalities can enjoy equal rights and freedoms?

Why was this question asked? Soon after President Gorbachev's declaration of decentralisation of power and religious liberalism through his policy, summed up in the two popular terms, 'perestroika' and 'glasnost', the country was beset with problems like food shortage, inflation, and a humiliating change in the attitude of certain nations towards the Soviet Union. So much so, some Republics began seeking independence from the Union. There were also widespread protests and agitations, sometimes leading to violence.

President Gorbachev, with the support of the Soviet parliament, decided to take the plunge, and the results of the referendum



have shown that he has succeeded in his objective. Barring six small Republics, which officially boycotted the referendum, the other nine Republics constituting nearly ninety percent of the country, voted overwhelmingly in favour of the union.

Apart from it being an indirect vote of confidence in President

Gorbachev, the referendum has saved the Soviet Union from the threat of disintegration. It now makes it harder for the secessionists to pursue and press their demand for independence. Moreover, the country's over hundred ethnic groups can look forward to greater freedom in their thoughts and actions.

PLEASE HELP ME, SIR! I'M A FATHER OF MANY CHILDREN. PLEASE!

HE SAYS, HE'S A FATHER OF MANY CHILDREN... ALL RIGHT I'LL HELP HIM.



THEN THE BRAHMIN PULLED HIM OUT.

THANK YOU, SIR!



MY NAME IS SATYASILA, LIVING IN YONDER TOWN... I SHALL ALSO REPAY YOUR KIND ACT ONE DAY...



THE BRAHMIN SET OUT ON HIS JOURNEY AGAIN—

I FEEL HUNGRY, I'LL GO AND SEE THE MONKEY.



THANK YOU! YOU'VE KEPT YOUR WORD... THE FRUITS ARE DELICIOUS!



PLEASE TAKE ME NOW TO THE HOME OF YOUR FRIEND THE TIGER!

FOLLOW ME!



AT THE TIGER'S CAVE. TAKE THESE JEWELS WHICH BELONGED TO A PRINCE WHOM I KILLED...



THEN THE BRAHMIN WENT TO SATYASILA'S HOUSE.

WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, SIR?



PLEASE SELL THESE PRECIOUS JEWELS AND GET ME SOME MONEY!



AH! I RECOLLECT! THESE ARE THE JEWELS I MADE FOR THE PRINCE!



WAIT HERE! I'LL COME BACK SOON I SHALL TRY TO GET AS MUCH AS I CAN FOR THESE JEWELS!



उत्तमे तु क्षणं कोपो मध्यमे घटिकाद्वयम् ।
अधमे स्यादहोरात्रं चाण्डाले मरणान्तिकः ॥

SATYASILA WITH THE JEWELS
WENT STRAIGHT TO THE KING.



YES! THESE ARE THE JEWELS
OF MY LATE SON... HOW DID
YOU FIND THEM?

A BRAHMIN BROUGHT THEM
TO ME, SIR!...



ARREST THAT BRAHMIN!



THE BRAHMIN WAS ARRESTED

WHAT CRIME HAVE I
COMMITTED!



THE BRAHMIN THEN
REMEMBERED THE SNAKE.



WHAT'S YOUR WISH, MY
FRIEND?

PLEASE HELP ME GET OUT OF
THIS CELL!



I WILL BITE THE QUEEN. NO ONE
CAN CURE HER... EXCEPT YOU...
THE KING WILL THEN SET YOU
FREE!

THE SNAKE DID AS PROMISED,
AND THE QUEEN FELL
UNCONSCIOUS. SEVERAL
PHYSICIANS AND MANTRIKAS
WERE CALLED, TO NO AVAIL.



WHOEVER CURES THE QUEEN
SHALL GET A REWARD OF A
THOUSAND VILLAGES!



THE BRAHMIN IN THE CELL----

PLEASE TAKE ME TO THE KING.
I CAN SAVE THE QUEEN....



FIRST LET ME INFORM THE
KING.



Wrath lasts only for a moment in those who are noble; in ordinary people it remains for an hour or two; in the inferior people it continues for a day and a night; with those who are the worst it lasts till their death.

THE BRAHMIN'S REQUESTS WERE GRANTED AND HE WAS TAKEN TO THE KING'S PRESENCE.



O' KING! DON'T WORRY. I CAN CURE THE QUEEN.

IN THE QUEEN'S APARTMENTS—THE BRAHMIN MEDITATED FOR SOMETIME AND----



NOW WAKE UP! O' QUEEN! WAKE UP!

SHE HAS RECOVERED!!

AFTER SOMETIME.

YOU ARE FREE NOW. BUT TELL ME THE TRUTH ABOUT THE JEWELS.



THE BRAHMIN NARRATED THE WHOLE STORY.

THAT'S HOW I GOT THE JEWELS IN RETURN FOR THE HELP I GAVE TO THE TIGER.



NOW I BELIEVE YOU! I'M GIVING YOU A THOUSAND VILLAGES AS A REWARD.

THANK YOU, O' KING!



DAMANAKA FINISHED THE STORY—

O' KING! SUCH IS THE STORY OF THE BRAHMIN WHO DID NOT HEED THE ADVICE OF HIS TRUE FRIENDS.

BUT



ONE SHOULD NOT TRUST STRANGERS.



BUT HOW CAN A BULL WHO EATS MERE GRASS HARM ME, THE KING OF BEASTS?



विरला जानन्ति गुणान् विरलाः कुर्वन्ति निर्धनस्नेहम् ।
विरला रणेषु धीराः परदुःखेनापि दुःखिता विरलाः ॥

THE BULL CAN GORE YOU TO DEATH WITH HIS HORNS!

AHA!



NOW HEAR THE STORY OF THE BUG IN THE ROYAL BED



ONCE A BUG NAMED DINDIKA ALONG WITH HIS FAMILY LIVED IN A KING'S BED AND GREW FAT ON ROYAL BLOOD.



HOW LUCKY WE ARE TO FEED ON ROYAL BLOOD EVERYDAY!



ONE DAY A FLEA LANDED ON THE ROYAL BED.

THIS BED LOOKS MAGNIFICENT!



HOW DARE YOU COME HERE!

PLEASE ACCEPT ME AS YOUR GUEST.



I HAVE TASTED THE BLOOD OF SEVERAL PEOPLE. BUT NEVER THE BLOOD OF A KING.



NO, GO AWAY!

THIS IS MY LIFE LONG DESIRE. PRAY, ALLOW ME TO TAKE A DROP OF ROYAL BLOOD!



ALL RIGHT! BUT THERE'S ONE CONDITION. YOU'VE TO WAIT TILL HE IS ASLEEP.



THAT NIGHT, AS THE KING GOES TO BED...



Rare are those who appreciate the merits of others; rare are those who hold the poor in affection; rare are those who remain calm in the battle and rare are those who are distressed at the grief of others.

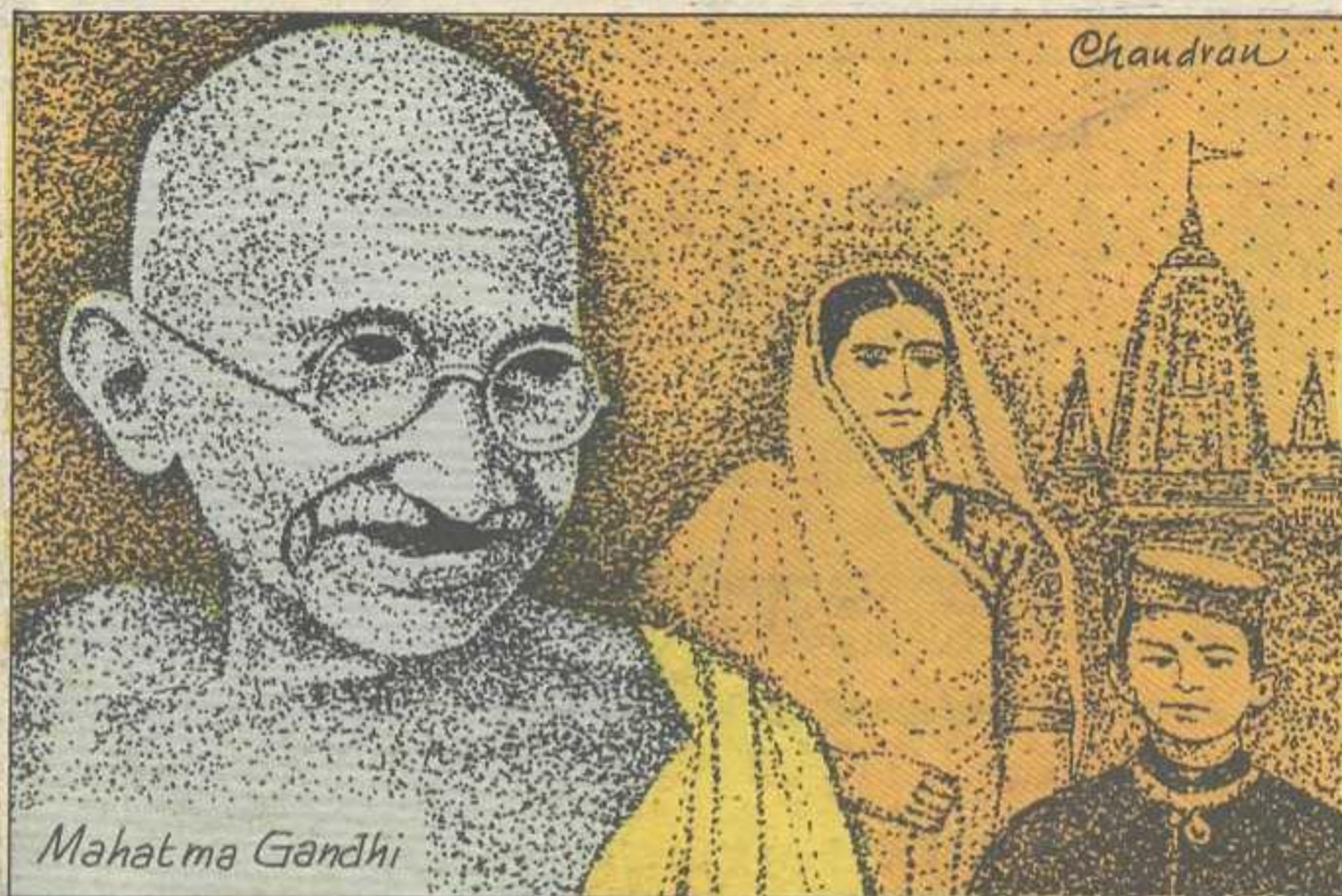
LEAVES FROM THE LIVES OF THE GREAT

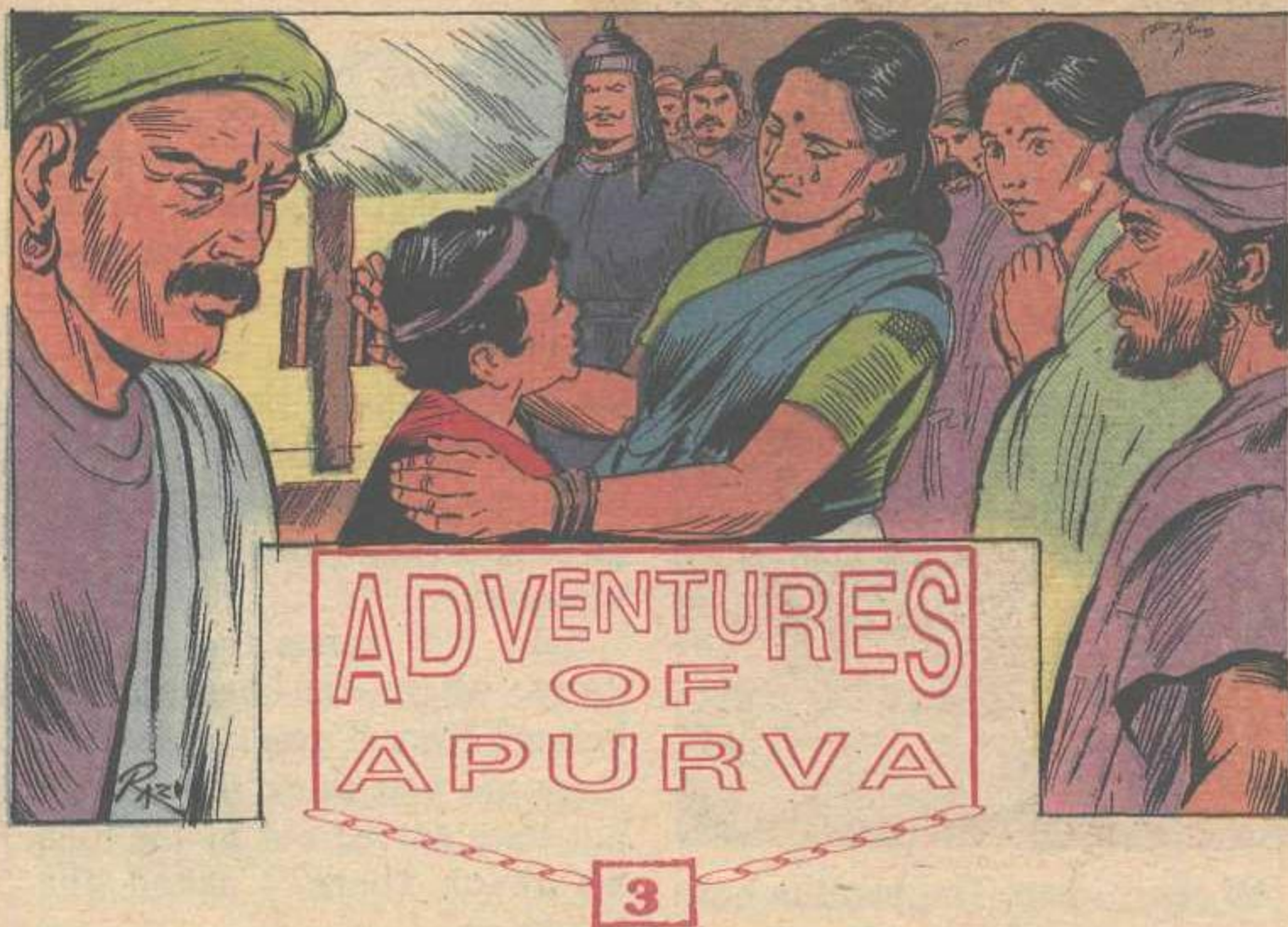
PUNCTUAL, EXCEPT ONCE

Mahatma Gandhi was a stickler to punctuality. Did you know that he learnt this good habit from his mother? It was her practice to visit a nearby temple every morning. She would get up before dawn and attend to her ablutions. From the time Mohandas had grown into a lad of 7 years, she would depend on him to take her to the temple. That meant an early rise for him and a bath. At first he did so with reluctance, but by and by he made it a habit to be punctual, lest his mother was delayed to carry out the chores that awaited her return from the temple.

One day, Mohandas got up as usual and, on his return from his bath, found that his mother was still in bed. He went and woke her up. She told him she had overslept as she felt unwell and had a disturbed night. The boy chided her for being unpunctual that morning, though they managed to visit the temple.

Later in life, Mohandas Gandhi never once broke his appointment, whether it was a meeting with someone, a journey, or a bhajan followed by a discourse. Except on that fateful day, when Nathuram Godse greeted him, "Bapuji, you're late," Gandhiji pulled out his watch, and Godse his gun, almost at the same time. Yes, the Mahatma was late by five minutes.





(Apurva, a tiny human being with supernatural powers, created by a sage in the Himalayas, rescues a village boy, Samir, from a gang of bandits.)

As soon as the villagers saw Samir approaching, they went running towards him. His mother took him in her frail arms and kissed him, tears of joy flooding her cheeks.

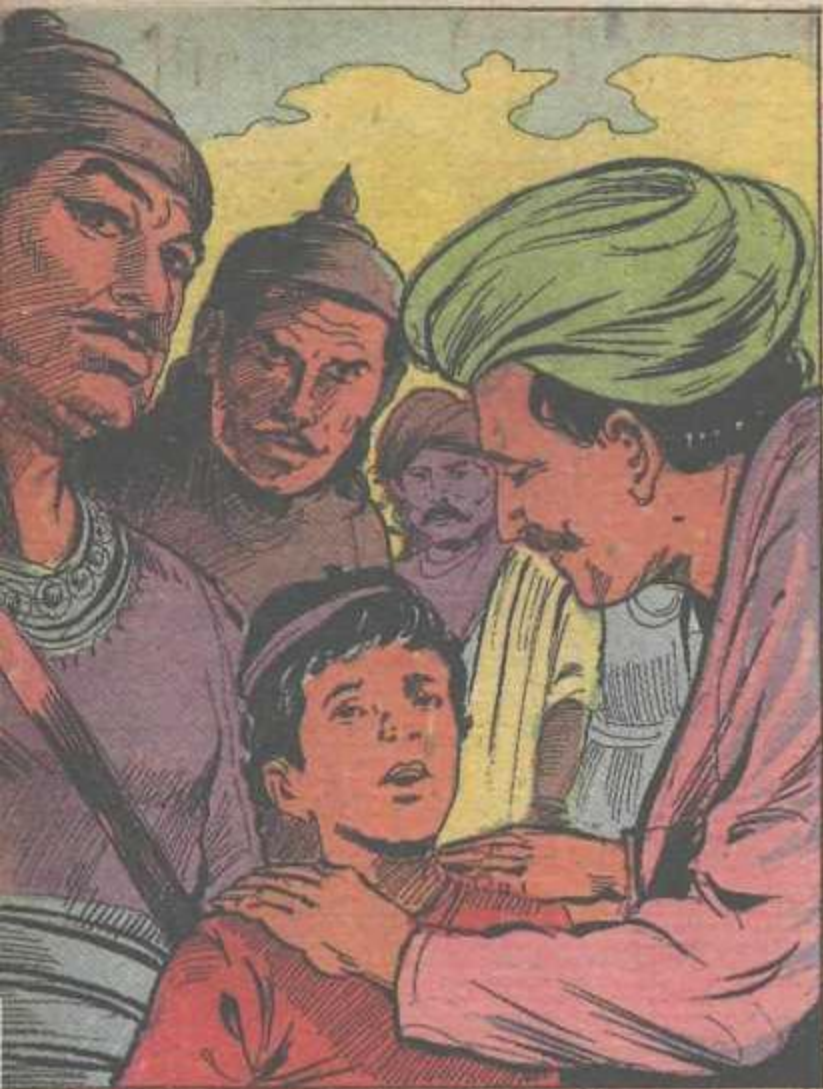
"How did you manage to escape from the clutches of Bhaloo Sardar?" asked the village headman, giving a hug to

Samir.

"Our Samir is not only brave, but also extremely intelligent. I knew this very well," said another senior villager. The others nodded in approval.

Samir merely folded his hands. "If today I am saved from certain death, it is by the intervention of God—through one of his angels.

A Miracle Awaited



Of that, later. The bandits have caused the death of so many people. It's not enough if I alone am saved," said Samir.

"That's true, my boy, but we're happy that at least one has slipped out of their net. As you know, it's impossible for us to confront the bandits. Even the king's officials and soldiers have not been able to suppress them," said the headman pensively.

"Everything has to come to an end. The menace of the bandits cannot go on forever. Now is the time for the king's soldiers to act. Let them come with me. I'll hand over the entire gang to them," declared Samir. Samir's confi-

dence surprised everybody. The captain of the soldiers, who were passing by and had been stopped by the villagers, looked quizzically at the boy. Had he gone crazy? the captain wondered. But the village headman knew Samir well. He knew that Samir's success in escaping from the clutches of the bandits would not go to his head to make him speak nonsense.

"Do you mean to say you know where the bandits are hiding? Even if you can lead us there, do you think they would not have moved out by the time we reach there?" asked the headman.

"And even if we find them, do you think my small regiment can be a match for them in number, arms, and strength?" asked the captain, lowering his voice.

"Sir, the bandits are under a spell now, lying in a stupor," said Samir.

The captain's face suddenly looked bright. He signalled his soldiers to follow him—and Samir. His mother caught hold of his hands and pleaded, "My son, eat some food before you set out again for the forest. You must be hungry and tired."

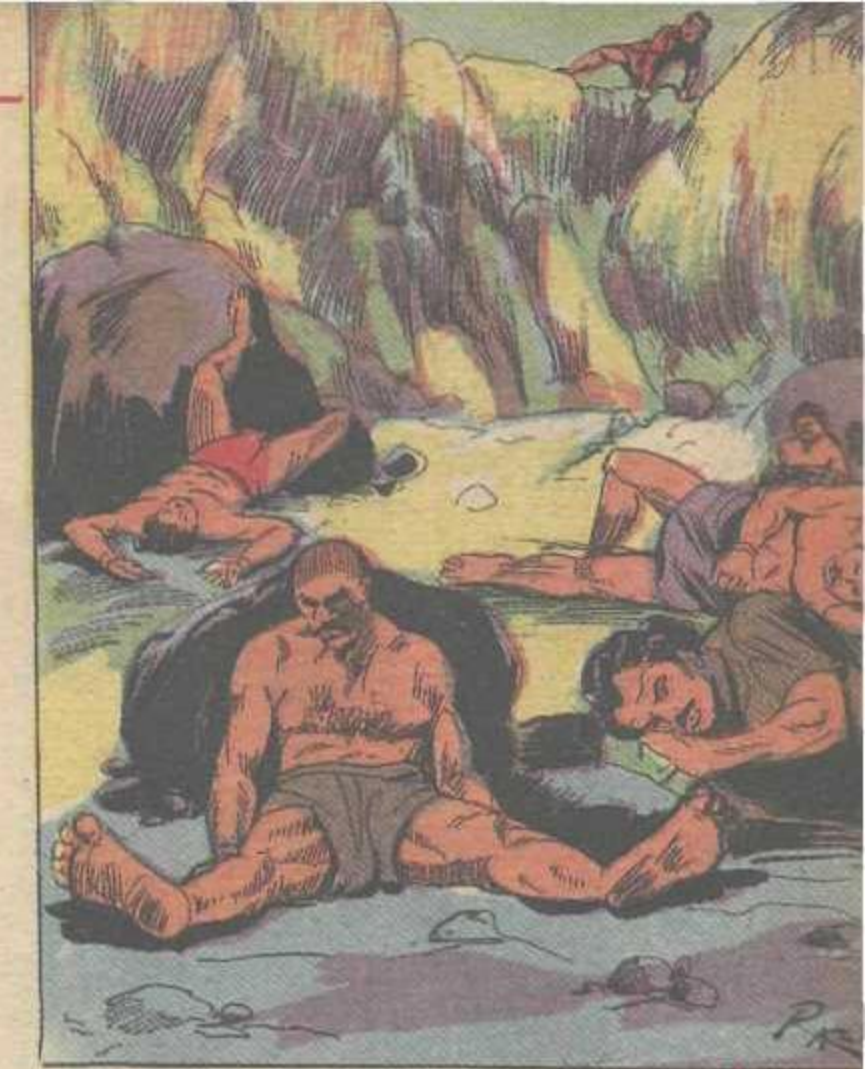
"Mother, I can eat to my

heart's content once my mission is accomplished. Any delay may spoil the opportunity," replied Samir, as he hurried out showing the way. The captain walked beside him. They were followed by the soldiers, and behind them the village headman and several able-bodied villagers armed with lathis.

They walked with great enthusiasm, though with caution, too. The valley where the bandits camped was near at sight. Asking the party to stop, Samir climbed on to a rock. He smiled. He could see the bandits still lying asleep. Some of them were even snoring. On a sign from him, the captain and the village headman climbed up the rock. As directed by the captain, the soldiers cut down some creepers. They were as sturdy and strong as well-knit rope. They began tying the hands of every member of the gang.

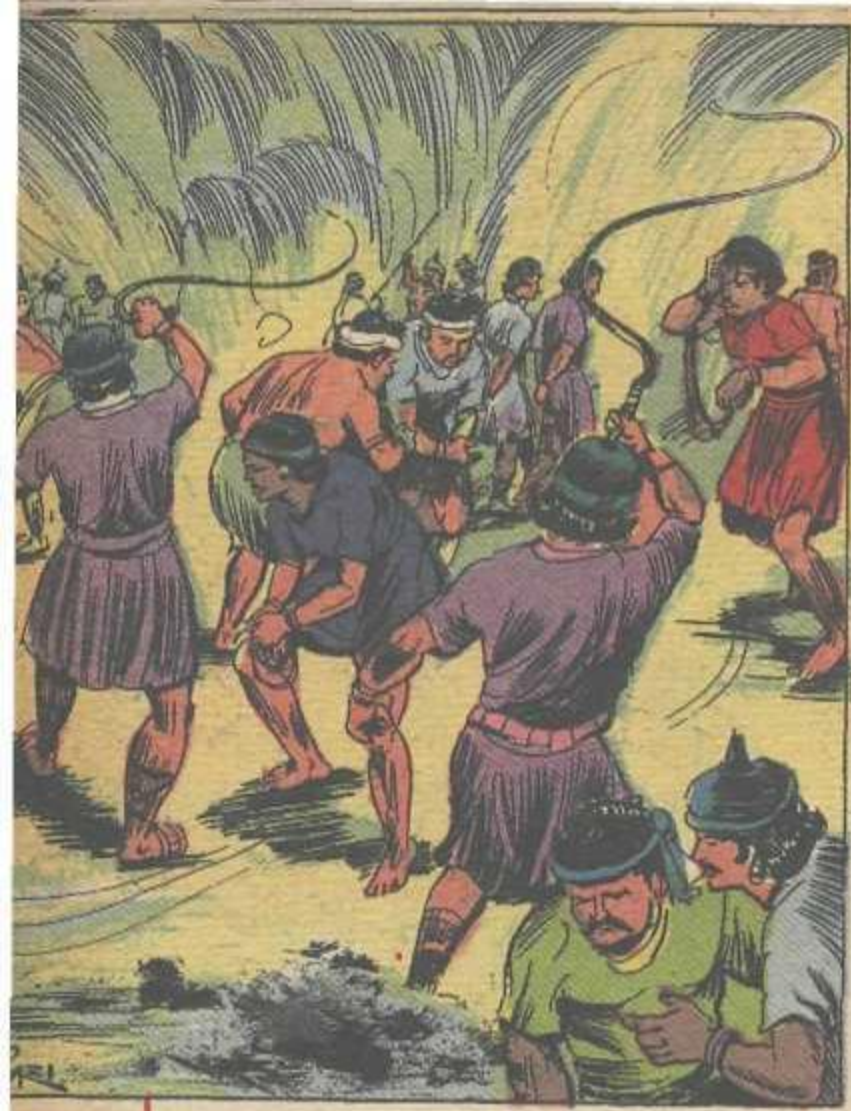
It was Bhaloo Sardar who opened his eyes first. He blinked and looked quite bewildered as his eyes fell on the captain's face.

"Get up, you rogue! And walk! If you refuse, we'll have to drag you through the thorny and rocky meadow. Parts of your limbs may remain behind you. We won't mind, at least your



heads will be with us! That'll satisfy the king," said the captain.

It still took some time before Bhaloo Sardar realised that he and his followers had been taken prisoners. As if by instinct, he tried to free himself, by biting off the creeper. But the captain planted a heavy blow on his mouth. "One more bite, and I'll knock all your teeth off!" He then gave another blow on his head. "Bhaloo! You've harassed hundreds of men and women; you've stabbed people, you've clubbed them, you've beaten so many of them to death. Don't expect any mercy from us. At the



slightest sign of resistance, we'll dismember you. We'll kill every one of your followers, without any hesitation. So be sensible, and walk like docile cattle. Do you follow what I say?"

The captain's stern voice reverberated all around. It echoed against the hills.

By then, all the members of the gang were on their feet. With their hands tied, and the captain's threat falling on their ears like thunder-claps, it was not difficult for them to realise that their game was up.

The soldiers whipped them as they were made to walk. Most of them were still drowsy. But they

were whipped again and again. They crossed the forest and reached Samir's village. Hundreds of people had gathered from the nearby villages to see the drama. The bandits walked, heads hung. The villagers once harassed by them came forward to wreak their vengeance on them. But Samir checked them. "Let the law take its course. These fellows are already humiliated," he said.

The villagers lifted up Samir in joy. He, the captain, and the soldiers were entertained to a sumptuous meal by the villagers.

Samir was standing under a tree. Suddenly he heard a whistle. There was something so charming about the tune that he could not help looking in the direction from which it came. It was a joyous sight, for a little away, hidden behind a bush, stood his saviour, Apurva.

Samir was about to rush to him when Apurva made a gesture. Apparently he did not want others to see or know about him. Samir waited for a moment and then, without attracting the attention of others, went near him. "I'm really delighted!" said Samir.

"So am I, for, you could get the



wicked bandits caught. No doubt they're wicked, but they too have hunger and thirst like anybody else. You may ask the village headman to feed them," said Apurva.

"I shall, O angel," said Samir.

"Call me a friend, not angel," chided Apurva.

The bandits soon found themselves in prison. Not only their hands, but their legs also had been tied with chains. They were given just enough food to keep them alive, before they were hanged.

All the bandits were to die on the gallows. That was the king's decree.

"Bhaloo! It's all because of you that we're in such a miserable state today," one of the bandits burst out.

"You call me Bhaloo? Don't forget that I'm still your chief. And you've to address me as Sardar," shouted Bhaloo.

"Forget? I've forgotten everything, except that we're going to die—all because of you. How can you still expect us to show respect to you?" rebuffed the bandit.

"Shut up! I'll hang you!" threatened Bhaloo Sardar in a shrill voice.

"You need not take that trou-

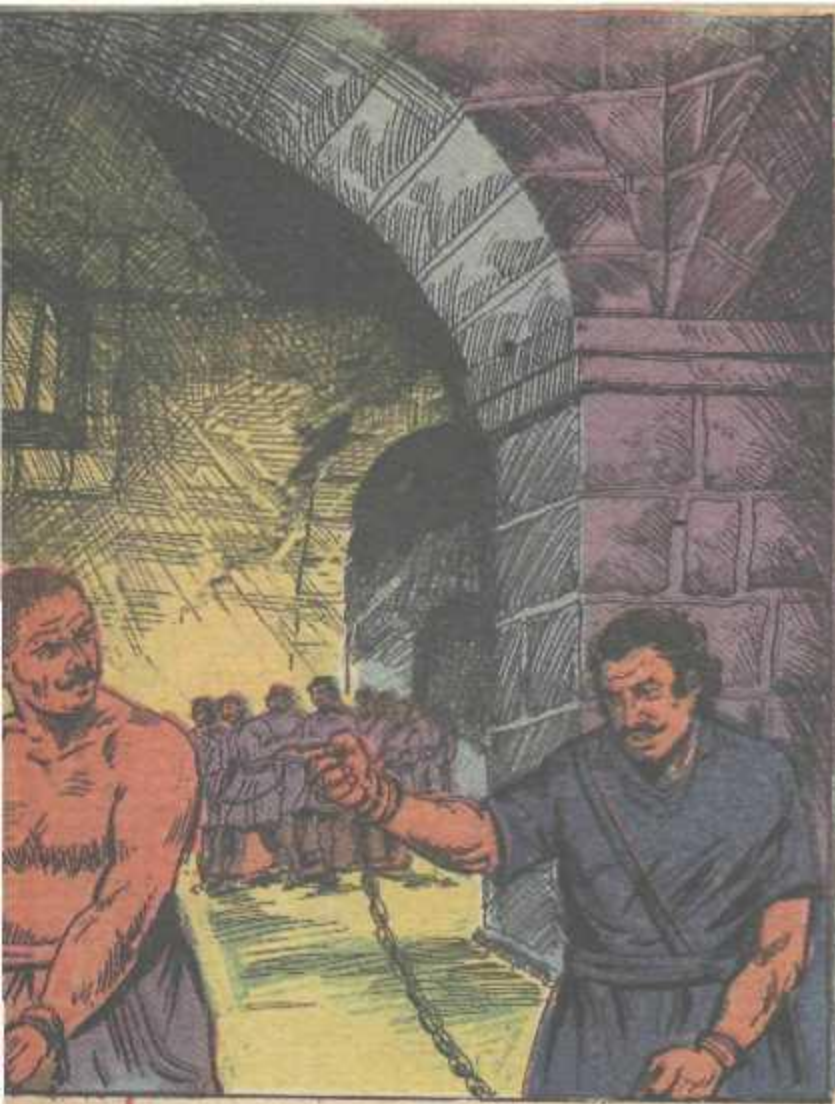


ble. I'm going to be hanged anyway, and so are you!" quipped the bandit.

Bhaloo Sardar ground his teeth in anger. He was shocked. Not only had one of his followers dared to snub him, but all the others had kept quiet! Did that mean they were all together and conspiring against him?

Suddenly, they heard a voice, "You fellows, do you wish to escape death?"

Who was it that asked the question? They looked around, but could not see anyone. But there was such a melody, at the same time such force, in the voice that it raised hopes in all the



prisoners.

"Who's speaking?" asked Bhaloo Sardar, staring at the dark corner of the room from where the voice came.

"The same person who was responsible for your capture!" said the voice, coolly.

"If you were responsible for our capture, why do you now want to set us free?" asked Bhaloo Sardar.

"My joy lies not in the death of a criminal, but in his new birth, in his remorse, in his reformation. You had to be caught because you were leading a life of sin. You were causing sorrow to others and were destroying yourselves.

You did not know into what kind of dark hell you were plunging your souls. If you continue to do so, there's no use living further," said the voice.

Needless to say, it was Apurva. But the bandits were unable to see him.

They kept quiet for a while. Then several of them together implored, "Kindly allow us to live. We won't be the same. We'll do whatever you want us to do. We'll be good. We'll live peacefully. That's a promise!"

"What does Bhaloo Sardar say?" asked Apurva, tauntingly.

First a whimper, then a sob was heard. He cried, "Once I, too, dreamed of a peaceful, happy life. By and by, I strayed into the life of a criminal. If you can really save us, we'll dedicate our lives to you!"

"Dedicate your lives to your souls, that would be enough," Apurva cut him short. "Your soul is a spark of God. Once you are in touch with it, it won't allow you to go astray."

"I don't bother about myself. If the king would pardon the others, I don't mind being hanged," said Bhaloo in all humility.

"That's the first sign of a change in you. Now, listen to me.

I shall plead for you with the king, though I can't promise anything. Meanwhile, pass your time in prayers. Seek God's forgiveness. He alone can save you," said Apurva.

Apurva instructed Samir to plead with the king and secure his pardon for the bandits. Samir went to the king, but he would not accept the boy's pleas. "These rogues have killed numerous people. They must be hanged," said the king, who seemed to have made up his mind. Yet he was most kind towards Samir.

"My lord, I've a feeling that God has already pardoned them. He would like to give them a chance to lead a new life," said Samir.

"Are you the voice of God?" asked the king, jocularly.

"No, my lord, but I hear the voice of God through the angel

who saved me from the bandits," replied Samir.

"Look here, if God wants to save them, he should do some miracle," argued the king.

"The bandits are repenting. There's a change of heart in them. That itself is a miracle, isn't it?" asked Samir, politely.

"May be, but that's not enough for me. God can even send a streak of lightning to strike at the rope by which Bhaloo would be hanged, should he wish to save that fellow!" said the king, laughing and patting Samir on the back.

Though Samir was disappointed, he went back and reported everything to Apurva.

"The miracle the king awaits will be performed!" said Apurva.

There was an air of mystery in that declaration.

—To continue



GRANDPA LONG LONG BEARD

In days gone by, an unusual sound came forth from the forest glade. A handsome knight who was passing by stood stunned for a moment, then suddenly saw in front of him a charming sight. He hid behind a thicket and looked on intently.

Under the great Oak and around a cackling fire danced and frolicked a host of gleeful children. They were, in fact, waiting for Grandpa Long Long Beard. Who was he? Whence did he come? No one knew, but the

children loved him and he loved them, too.

Crick Crack, Crickety Crack! sang the wooden shoes of Grandpa Long Long Beard. He appeared, back slightly bent under a large bag, a parrot perched on his shoulder, and his soft snow-white beard flowing down to his toes.

"Good morning, my sweet little cherubs," he gently greeted them and the parrot repeated after him.

"Good morning, Grandpa.



What're you going to tell us today?" asked the children in a musical voice.

"Ah! I've important news for you," he replied, distributing presents and cookies of nuts and honey from his bag.

"The two kingdoms bordering this forest are making war on each other," continued the old man. "But alas! the good king, with a daughter as beautiful as the spring day, will always be defeated."

"Why?" interrupted the parrot who, too, was listening with interest.

"Just because his army cannot cross the deep winding river. For, there is no bridge over it," replied his master.

"What'll happen to the beautiful princess, then?" asked a wee girl, betraying great anxiety.

"The wicked king will take her to his land and marry her off to his son," said the old man.

"Is there no way out to save the good king?" enquired a smart little lad.

"There is, yet there is not. For,

*The twig of the Cedar tree,
Not very far from you and
me,*

Shall form a bridge when

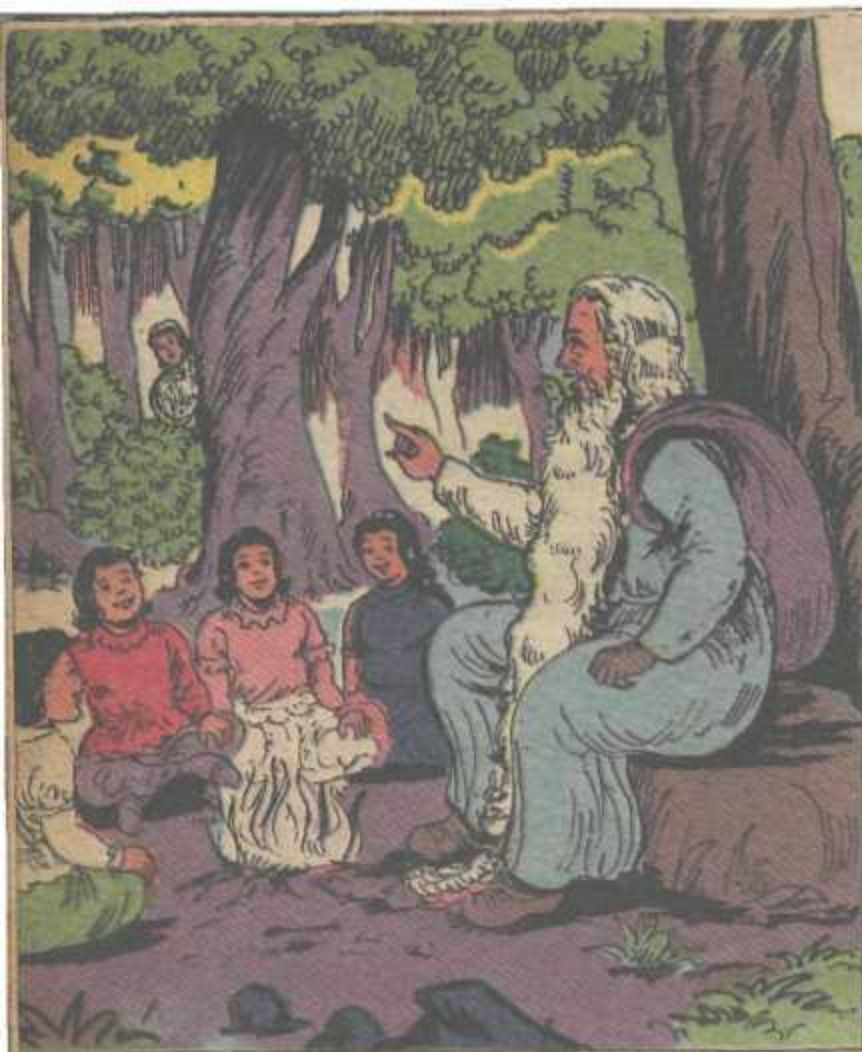


*placed on water,
The army then can cross
thereafter.
But whosoever lets this truth
out,
Shall turn to stone before he
can shout."*

The young knight, who was from the land of the good king, had heard enough. He found the Cedar tree without any difficulty and, breaking a twig, made his way to the palace.

"Your Majesty, at nightfall I will build a bridge across the river. Please do not ask me anything further," said the young man.





"If you accomplish what you say," replied the king, "you shall be aptly rewarded."

As soon as the knight placed the twig on the water, it expanded and formed a bridge across the river. The next day, the king's army crossed over to the other side. They took the enemy by surprise and defeated them. But within a few days, the enemy regained strength and won a victory.

The young man went to the great Oak and saw the children playing around the fire. He waited, concealed by the thick shrub. Crick Crack, Crickety

Crack. Grandpa Long Long Beard made his appearance.

"What interesting tidings do you bring us today?" asked the children excitedly.

"Yes, I do have some news for you. I'll tell you. But, mind you, never repeat it aloud once you've heard it. The good king did manage to build a bridge with the help of the knight who heard my words the other day. But the enemy has again gained advantage.

*"Yet, there is a huge Fig tree,
Not very far from you and
me.*

*The powdered figs when
thrown on eyes,
Shall drive away the bad bad
guys.*

*But whosoever lets this truth
out,
Shall turn to stone before he
can shout."*

The knight found the Fig tree without any trouble. He gathered some fruit and powdered them under a rock. Then, going to the king, he said, "My Lord, do not be disheartened. Challenge the enemy tomorrow. Instruct the army to execute the attack along with the flow of the wind. Put me in the first rank and the day shall

be ours."

The king was happy that there was such a brave man in his realm. He consented to the knight's proposal and promised him a greater reward if he succeeded in his task.

There was a fierce battle the following day. The young man spread the powdered figs in the air. Black clouds formed as though by magic and blinded the enemy without even bursting into a shower. Many fought bravely but fell to the sword of the knight and his men. Others fled. The wicked king was forced to surrender.

The king, overjoyed at the young man's achievements, embraced him and said, "What other worthy reward do you deserve but the hand of my daughter? You're daring and noble."

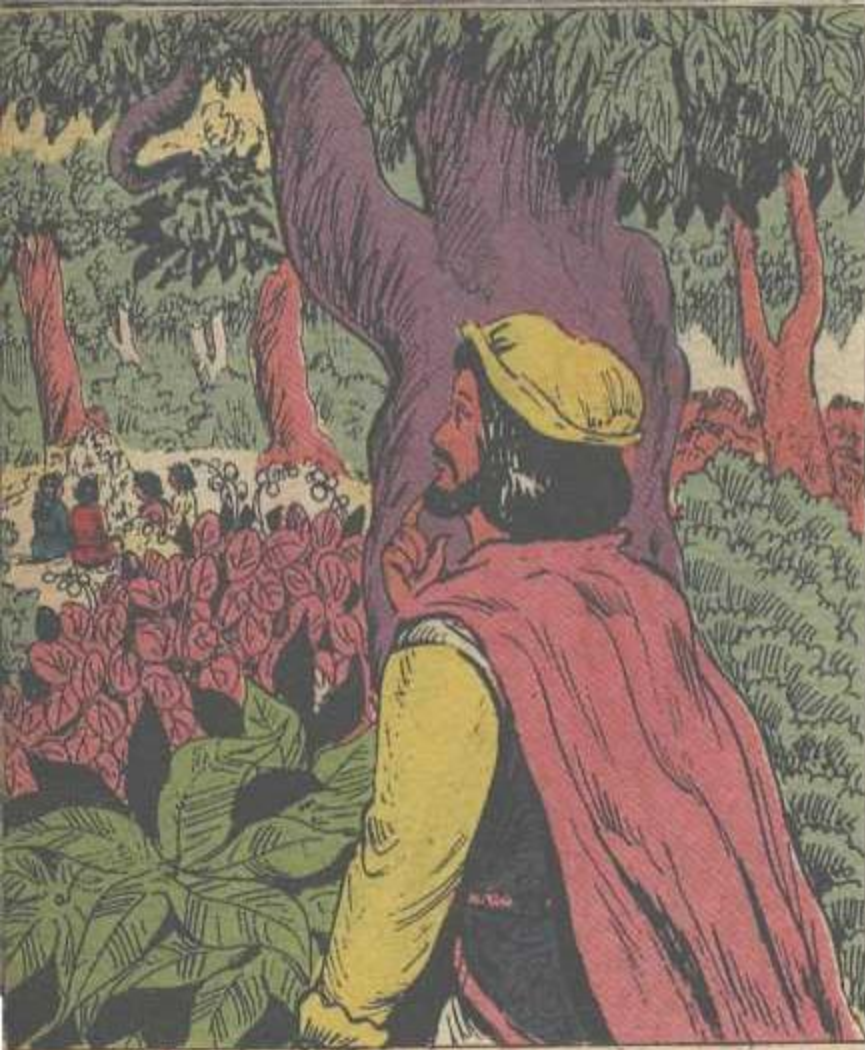
Awaiting the day fixed for the marriage, the young man often took long walks with the princess in the sprawling palace gardens. One day, she asked him, "Tell me, dear, how could you construct a bridge across the river in a single night? And what is that magical substance that drove away the enemy?"



The knight, who had by now forgotten the ominous warning, told the princess all about the strange happenings in the forest. Alas, no sooner had he reached the end of the story than he turned into a statue of stone. The delicate princess gave a frightful cry and one of the king's nobles, who happened to be nearby, rushed to her side.

"What has befallen our gallant knight?" he asked the princess.

Recovering from her shock, the princess related in every detail what she had just gathered. Scarcely had she ended her story than she, too, was transformed



into stone.

The small kingdom knew no greater sorrow. There, in the palace gardens, amidst bright-hued flowers, dancing fountains and sweet chirping of birds, stood the lifeless statues of the beautiful princess and the handsome knight.

The noble who had heard the story from the princess could not get a wink of sleep. He was overcome with the desire to find the enchanting place and the mysterious Grandpa Long Long Beard. On the morrow he went to the forest and found the great Oak. There, in the clearing, the

fire was cackling merrily and the children were playing around it. Crick Crack, Crickety Crack! Grandpa Long Long Beard made his appearance wearing his singing shoes of wood.

"What news do you have for us, Grandpa?" the children eagerly asked.

"Of course, I do have some news for you," he replied. "The other day one of the king's officers happened to ride by this place when he overheard me. He built a bridge across the river and beat the enemy by means of the powdered figs and brought victory to his land. The grateful king offered him his daughter's hand in marriage. But alas, the young man revealed the secret to the princess and forthwith turned into stone. The princess, too, repeated it and met the same fate. The merry kingdom is now plunged in the deepest sorrow."

"O dear, dear!" a sensitive little girl cried out, drops of tears trickling down her rosy cheeks.

"But," continued the old man, "A spring runs over the lea,
Not very far from you and me.

*When sprinkled with water
from this stream,*



*The statues will again like
humans dream.
But whosoever lets this truth
out,
Shall turn to stone before he
can shout."*

The noble located the brook without much difficulty and brought a cupful of its sparkling water. He then hastened to the palace gardens. Scarcely had he sprinkled a few drops on the two statues, lo and behold! there stood before him the princess and the knight in flesh and blood.

The kingdom wore a festive look and was agog with excitement as the good news spread everywhere. The happy monarch asked the noble how he could perform such a miracle and restore his daughter to life. But the good man refused to reveal the secret that might lead to terrible consequences. The king, however, insisted and was bent upon knowing it. The noble's persistent refusal angered him.

"If you do not reveal the mystery behind this miracle, you shall be banished forever from my land," said the king to the noble.

"Your Majesty, please grant me a week's time," begged he.



"So be it," replied the king. "But mind you, on the seventh day you should present yourself before me."

Next day, early in the morning, the noble wended his way to the charming spot, by way of taking a chance—if he could hear some clue to save himself.

The children had just gathered around the fire and were relishing plum cakes their Grandpa had brought out of his large bag. The parrot was entertaining them all with his nonsense rhymes and abracadabras.

"I've something interesting to tell you today," said the old man,



"but you must not by any means repeat it. Last time one of the king's men hidden behind that bush heard my words. He found the spring and with its magical water restored the princess and the knight back to life. But the king now wants to know how he could perform such a miraculous feat. What can he do but to let the secret out? Well, he shall forthwith be changed into stone."

"Please do tell us Grandpa Long Long Beard, is there no way to prevent this mishap?" asked his wee audience all together.

"There is," replied the old man, "but you mustn't talk about it."

*"There is a tall Cherry tree,
Not very far from you and
me.*

*Whoever eats its big round
fruit, ripe and red,*

*Can speak the truth with no
fear dread.*

*But should he let his own
secret out,*

*He shall turn to stone before
he can shout."*

The noble at once rushed to the Cherry tree and ate one of its red fruits. He then hurried to the palace and recounted to an astonished king the story behind the strange happenings. As he never said how he immuned himself against the ill effect, nothing happened to him.

The marriage of the brave knight and the beautiful princess was performed with much gaiety. By the way, the noble assumed the role of the bridegroom's guardian, as the knight had lost his own father.

And all of them lived happily thereafter.

—Retold by Anup Kishore Das



CHANDAMAMA SUPPLEMENT-31

THE INDIA OF THEIR DREAMS

CONSECRATE YOURSELF TO THE MOTHERLAND

India had many celebrated leaders to lead her struggle for freedom. Among them one had a very special appeal for the people. She was Sarojini Naidu, a great woman who knew no fear and a poet of commendable calibre.

Her father, Aghorenath Chattopadhyaya, served as the Principal of the Nizam College at Hyderabad. She was born there in 1879. Though a Bengali Brahmin, she married a Telugu Kshatriya, Dr. Govindarajulu Naidu. In all her actions and ideas, she proved progressive alike. She became the President of the National Congress in 1925.

Wherever she went, she inspired people with the greatness of India, the richness and grandeur of this ancient civilisation. This is the pledge she took at the beginning of her political career, and she wanted others to take:

“Stand with me, with the stars and the hills for witness, and in their presence consecrate your life, your talents, your song, your speech, your thought, your charm to your Motherland.”

DO YOU KNOW?

1. Custom makes even a newborn male a prospective hunter and warrior. Where?
2. Which is the highest waterfall in the world?
3. What is the difference between the Queen of Deccan and the Deccan Queen?
4. If gondolas can be seen in Venice, where can similar boats be seen in India?
5. How does the monolith figure of Gomateswara in Sravana-belagola compare with the Qutb Minar—in height?



LAKSHMI

Along with the various wealth that emerged from the ocean when it was churned by the gods and the demons, was goddess Lakshmi.

She is worshipped as the goddess of Wealth, but it is not merely a material wealth over which She presides. She is the

giver of true wealth—the wealth of inner prosperity. That is to say, by Her grace, one can find deep peace which comes out of a total trust in the Divine.

Lakshmi is the consort of Narayana or Vishnu. One of the names of Lakshmi being Sri,

Vishnu is known as Sripati. In her heavenly abode, She is Svargalakshmi; in households She is called Grihalakshmi; merchants worship Her as Vanijyalakshmi

and the warriors worship Her as Vijayalakshmi. The flower, lotus, is so dear to Her that she is also known as Kamala, a name for lotus.

NEWS FLASH

EXTRAORDINARY GIRLS

Two Indian girls were in the news recently. And both were appearing for the 10th standard examination. Moushumi Chakravarty was singled out in West Bengal, as she is only 8 years 7 months, and is credited with an extraordinary memory. Sunita Kacharu Sawant of Maharashtra wrote all her papers with her toes, as she has no hands. Though she was offered an extra half-hour for each paper, she completed every one of them within the allotted three hours.



UNCONVINCED

An 8-year old American boy gave Mr. George Bush a tough time refusing to be convinced that it was the U.S. President himself who stood by his side in the classroom. He was visiting the Barcroft Elementary School. He showed little Anthony Henderson his driving licence that carries his name; he also showed him his credit card, besides a photograph of his grandson; finally he pointed at the Presidential limousine parked at the gate. Anthony merely smiled at all this exercise, as if he wanted better evidence!

LET US EXPLORE THE WORLD OF LITERATURE

1. One chapter in a book written by Bhaskara was named after his daughter. What was her name? The name of the book?
2. Who was the first Russian writer to receive the Nobel Prize for literature?
3. The colour of flowers inspired C.V.Raman to write a book. Name the book.
4. *The Last Man in Europe* actually appeared under another title. Name the book and its author.
5. Mary Ann Evans and Eric Blair were the real names of two well-known writers. Who are they?

ANSWERS

DO YOU KNOW?

1. In Coorg, Karnataka, a little bow and arrow are placed in the hands of an infant, and a gun is fired to herald his entry into the world.
2. The Jog Falls in Karnataka have a drop of 253 metres.
3. The Queen of Deccan is how Pune is popularly called; the Deccan Queen is the name of the daily superfast train running between Pune and Bombay (190 km).

4. *Shikaras*, in the Dal lake of Kashmir.
5. One is 17 metres and the other 71 metres high.

LITERATURE

1. Leelavati, *Siddhantasiromani*
2. Mikhail Sholokov, in 1965.
3. *The Physiology of Vision*, which is an appreciation of colours.
4. *1984*, by George Orwell
5. George Eliot, George Orwell.

WORLD MYTHOLOGY

MYSTERY OF TWO TREES

There was a beautiful village situated in a valley. Once upon a time there was a lake in place of the valley. But the lake had dried up and a village had come up. Nature smiled on the village. The people had excellent crops.



At one end of the village lived an old man named Philemon and his wife, Bauci. They were poor, but worked hard and cultivated grapes. What they earned was just enough for two meals a day. They had no regrets.



One evening, the couple heard the village dogs barking and the boys yelling. They feared that some travellers were being harassed, for the villagers were very cruel and they set their dogs and children upon any stranger they saw.



Philemon and Bauci received the strangers and ushered them into their hut. "We're ashamed of the behaviour of the villagers," they said. "Why are they teaching their children to be brutes? Today we understand why the travellers avoid this valley," said the strangers.

The couple had a small quantity of milk and half a loaf with them. They placed the items on the table. Bauci poured the milk into two cups. The strangers drank it in two gulps and said, "Can you give us some more? It's so delicious!"



Alas, there was no more milk left with Bauci. "I'm so sorry," she said, "There's hardly a drop left in the jug!" The stranger smiled and said, "Even half a drop would do!" As Bauci sighed and upturned the jug, lo! and behold, a stream of milk flowed into the cups.

"Why don't you drink some? There's still plenty in the jug!" said the strangers. Bewildered, Philemon and Bauci tasted the milk. Indeed, it was delicious beyond description! Surprisingly, the guests cut a piece from the loaf, but it remained of the same size.



The strangers spent their night in the couple's hut. When it was morning, they prepared to set out on their journey. The couple proposed to go with them till the end of the village so that they were not harassed by anybody.

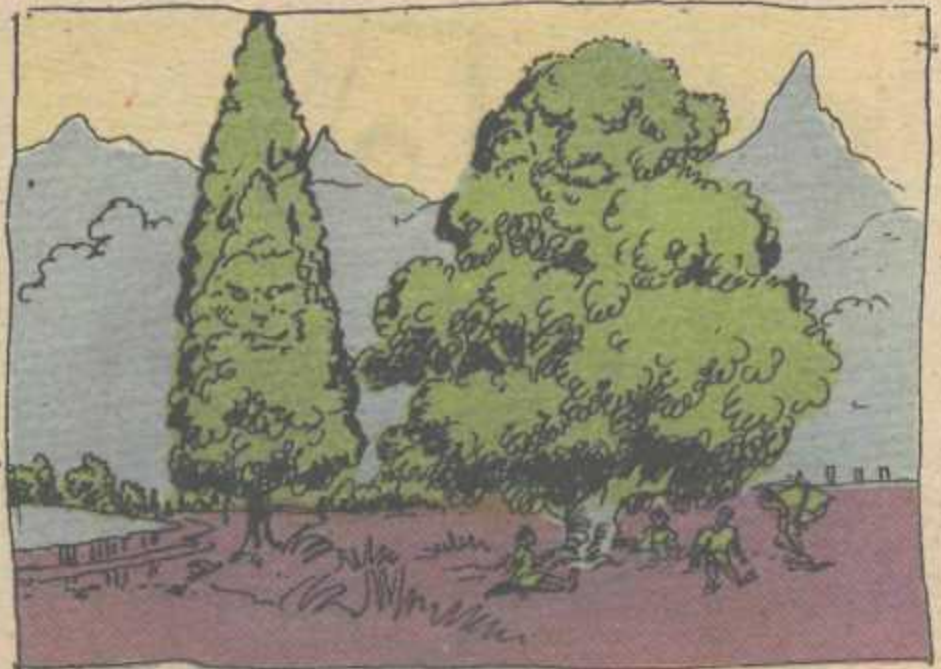
But imagine the bewilderment of Philemon and Bauci when they saw that the village had just vanished! In its place was a lake. "The villagers did not deserve this valley. So the lake has reclaimed the village! All the villagers are now living as fish," explained the strangers.



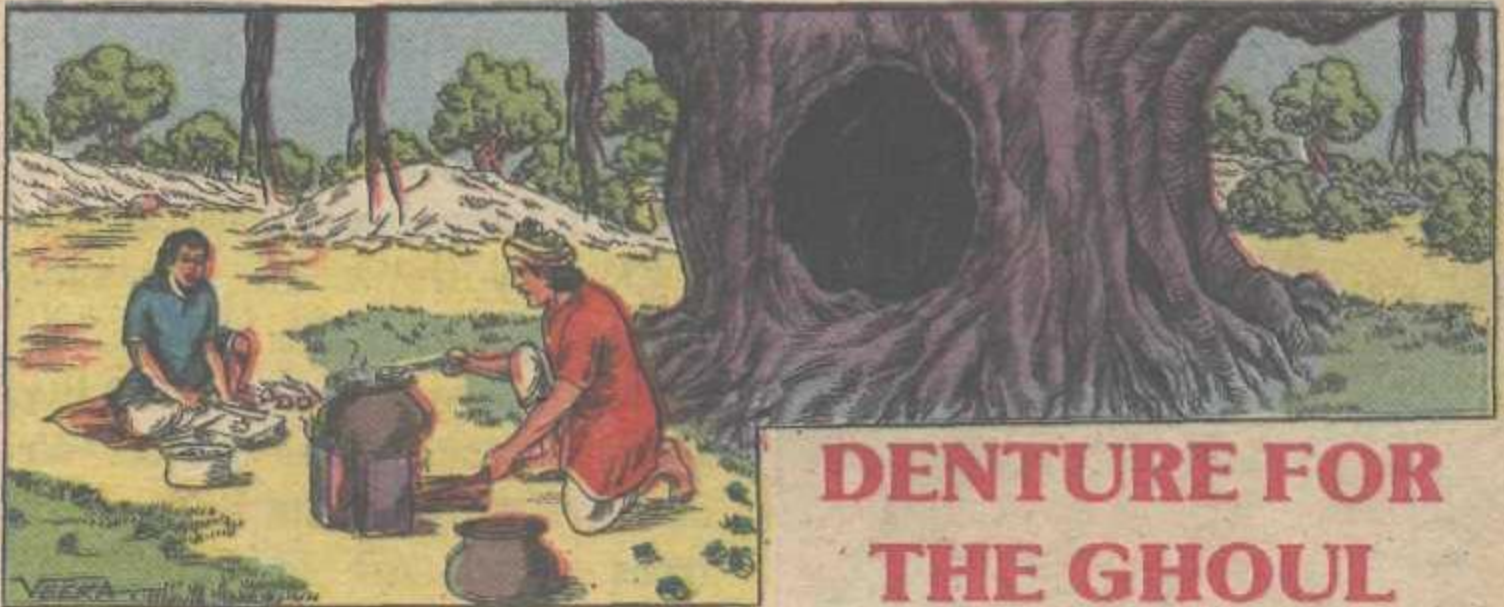


"Now, look back!" the strangers told the couple. What should they see but a beautiful house standing in place of their old hut? "You both are so kind towards strangers. We thought you need a bigger house for entertaining more of them!" they said. The old man and his wife bowed to them, but they, too, had disappeared.

Their jug never failed to pour out delicious milk for all the weary travellers who took shelter in their house. Their grapevine became the talk of the land, because the grapes were so sweet! Although they were old, they were never wanting in enthusiasm to entertain whoever came their way.



A new village grew around the lake. The people were very respectful of Philemon and Bauci. They never ate any fish from the lake because the fish were once human beings! At last one day, Philemon and Bauci were not to be seen. They had become two trees, an oak and a linden, giving shade to all.



DENTURE FOR THE GHOUL

Purna and Suraj were two young men who were very poor. There was nobody in their village rich enough to employ them in his fields.

One day the two friends left for a bigger village where there were several wealthy farmers and merchants. They worked in the fields of one of them. They were paid according to their work. If they ploughed two acres of land instead of one or cleaned one acre of wasteland instead of half-acre during a day, they were paid twice the normal daily wage.

They were keen to save enough money so that one day they could build huts for themselves and marry too! That is why they did not take any house on rent. They found a lonely place outside the village. There was a huge banyan tree there. Their employer gave

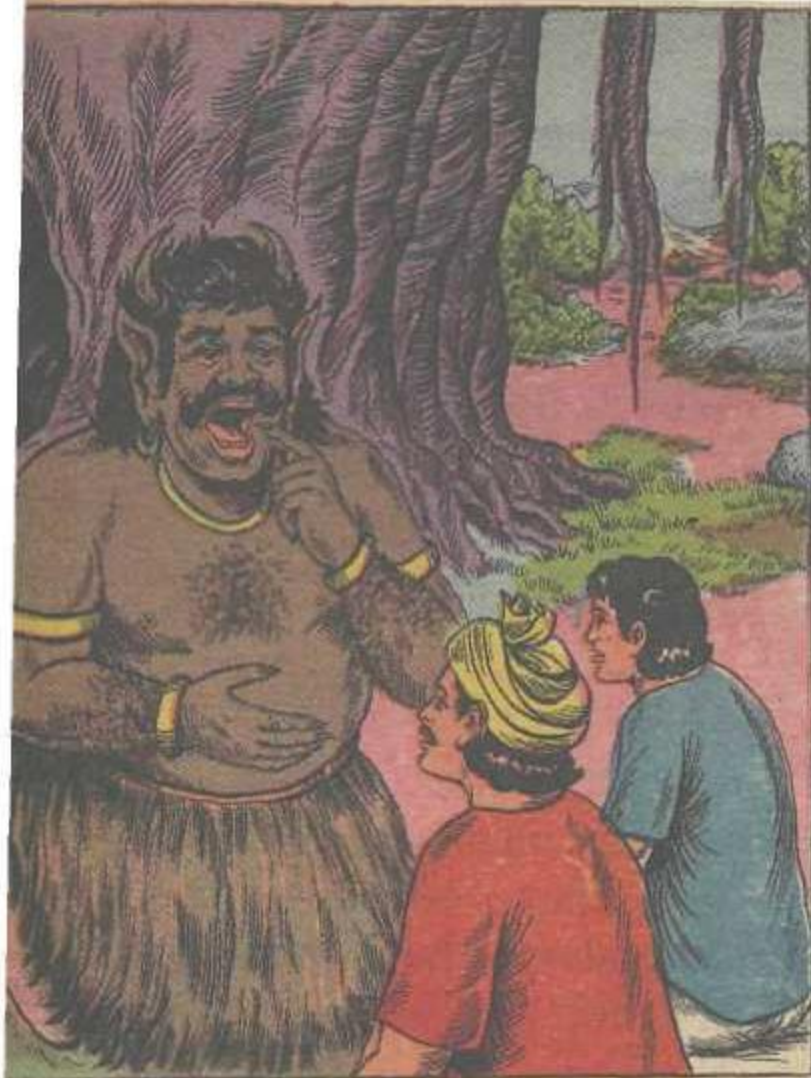
them their mid-day meals. In the evening they retired to their shelter under the banyan tree and cooked their food and slept there. Nearby there was a large lake. They bathed and cleaned their clothes there. They hid their money in the hollow of the tree.

One day, after returning from their work, they saw that the ground under the banyan tree had been swept clean. The earthen pots they used for cooking had been washed. Even some dry twigs had been collected and left there.

"Has someone else started living here?" asked Purna with some irritation.

"I hope, nobody, has stolen our money away!" said Suraj, as he put his hand into the hollow.

He shrieked in horror. "What is the matter?" Purna asked.



"I touched something fleshy, but as hot as fire!" said Suraj.

Suddenly they heard a nasal voice: "I am sorry to have scared you. I am a poor ghoulish who has taken shelter here!"

Next moment a huge dark creature emerged from the hollow and bowed to them.

Both the friends had the creeps, but they put up brave faces and looked at the ghoulish straight in the eye. "What business have you to occupy our hollow?" demanded Purna.

"The greatest wizard of this land happens to be my maternal uncle's paternal uncle's brother-

in-law's brother-in-law! If I report to him, he will forthwith put an end to your ghoulish life!" Suraj sounded very impressive.

"Kindly don't do any such thing!" pleaded the ghoulish. "As you know, we ghoulish cannot live at any place of our choice. We can live only in the hollows of trees which are at least nine hundred years old. There is no other tree of that age anywhere nearby excepting this one. Where could I go once I was driven out of my horde?"

"You must have been very naughty to be driven out of your horde!" observed Purna.

"Not so. It is because of the loss of my teeth that I had to suffer that humiliation. You see, in the community of ghoulish, teeth are a must. Once a ghoulish loses his teeth it is believed that he would bring ill-luck to the community. So he is thrown out," said the ghoulish.

"But how did you lose your teeth?" asked Suraj.

"That is a long story. There was..."

Suraj stopped the ghoulish from going on with his narration with an impatient gesture of his hand and said, "We have no time for

your long story. You may go!”

“Where can I go? Let me be here. I will serve you not like one servant but like a full dozen servants. I will cook for you gathering vegetables from the forest and fish from the lake; I will wash your clothes and keep this place clean!” said the ghou.

By then the first surprise and fear of meeting a ghou had been over. Purna and Suraj exchanged looks and decided to try a new pattern of living, with the ghou for their assistant.

“All right. Stay on,” they said. The ghou was delighted. He cooked for them their dinner for that very night and they found the food quite tasteful. The ghou of course devoured the lion’s share.

Next day the two friends went out to attend to their work as usual. The ghou kept itself busy cleaning the place and washing their clothes.

Days passed and Purna and Suraj were happy with their assistant. Now they could work longer and earn more. One day while giving them money, their employer said, “It seems you are already married!”

“What made you think so, Suraj.



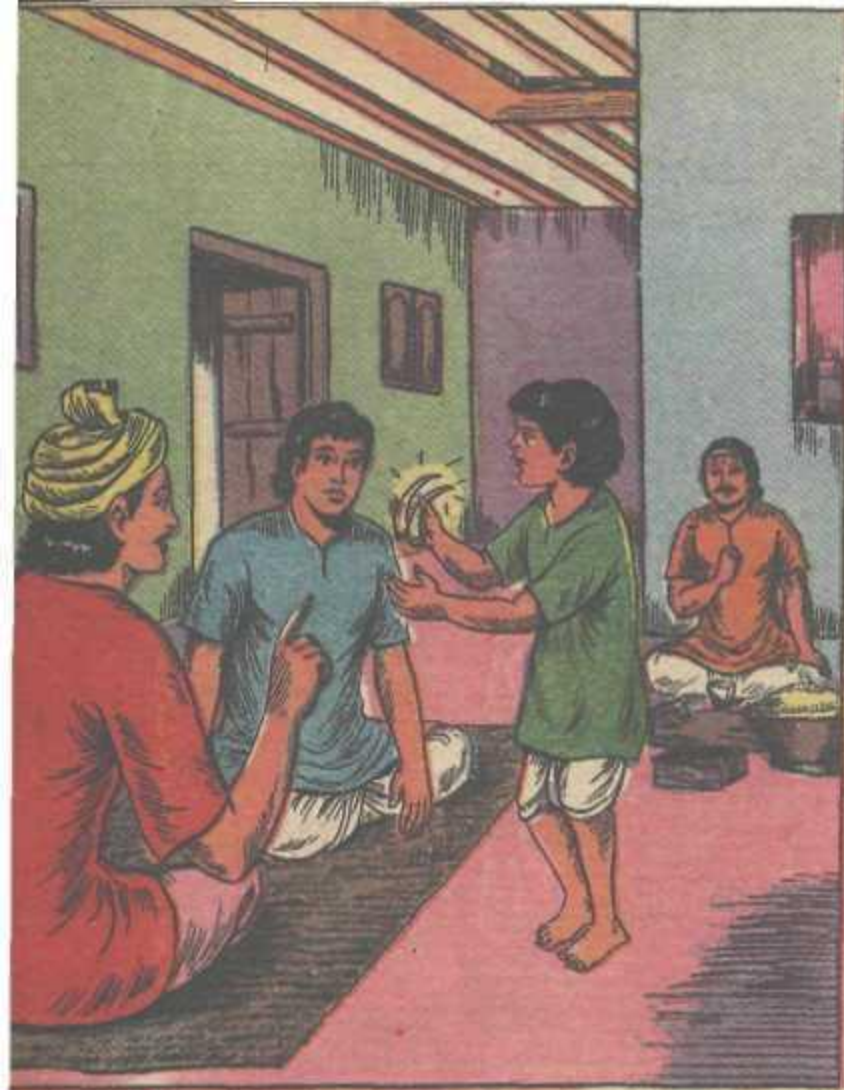
sir?” asked the two friends.

The employer laughed and explained, “I have seen that when people marry they work harder in order to earn more.”

As he laughed, the two friends saw that two of his teeth dazzled. It is because they were made of gold.

On their way to their shelter, Purna said, “What if we buy a gold denture for the ghou? He would be so happy!”

“That is true. The poor thing is extremely sad for losing its teeth. But the gold denture would cost a lot. A silver one would do,” said



The two friends went to a goldsmith asked him to make a silver denture which would be twice as big as that worn by any human being—and with two teeth jutting out like the tusks of an elephant.

“What for?” asked the craftsman.

“For a drama. A man acting the role of a ghoulish has to wear it!” said the two friends.

To their pleasant surprise, the craftsman had such a set with him which was once used by a Raja’s drama troupe. The troupe had been disbanded and he had bought it along with a few other

things. He sold it to the two friends.

The goldsmith’s little son who overheard a part of their conversation came closer to them and asked, “What! You need denture for a ghoulish? How are you related to a ghoulish? And how did the ghoulish lose his teeth?”

The two friends said jokingly, “Well, we have tamed a ghoulish serving us. It lost its teeth because it was naughty and so the king of ghoulish knocked them off! He serves us expecting that we will give him a set of silver teeth!”

“And you are going to fulfil his desire?” said the boy and he laughed.

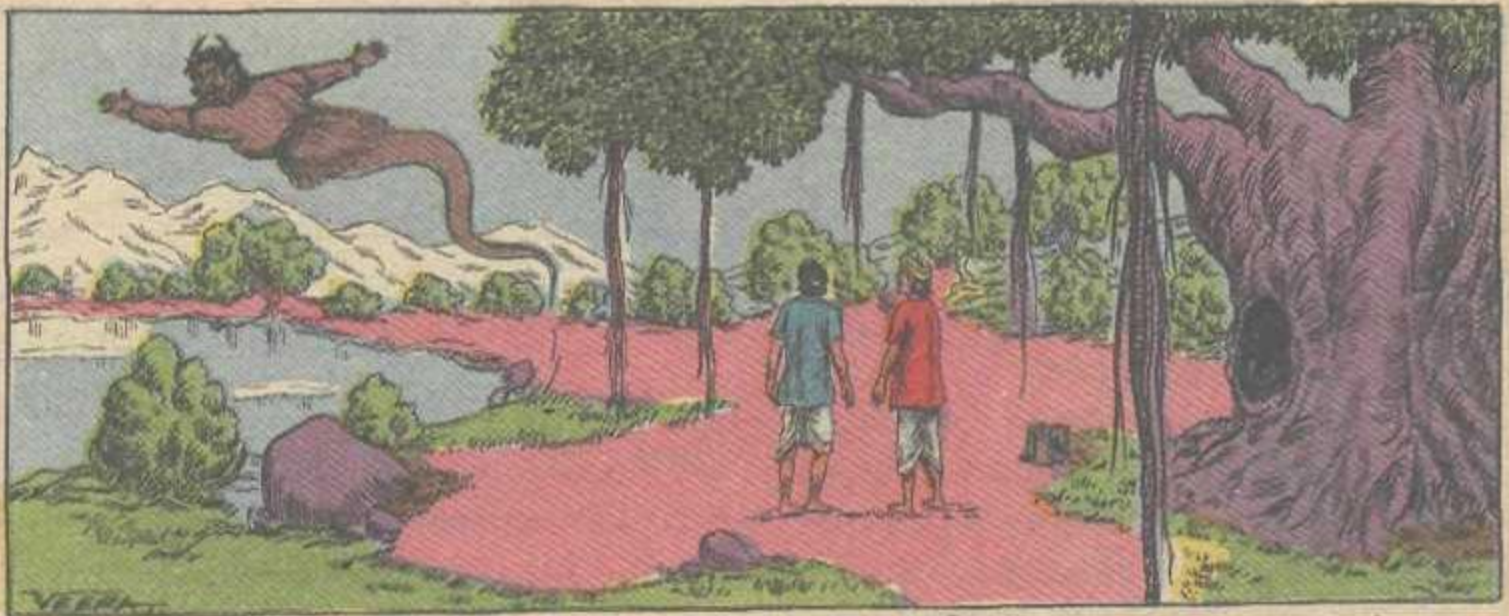
Purna and Suraj were leaving the place. The boy asked them, “Don’t you wish to know why I laughed?”

“Another time, boy, we are in a hurry today,” said the two friends and they went away.

Back at the banyan tree, they presented the denture to the ghoulish. It was so happy that it danced around them and saw the reflection of its face on the waters of the lake.

“Now, I will not only be admitted into my horde, but also would become the king of the





ghouls, for no other ghoul has silver teeth!" exclaimed the ghoul.

"Are you going to leave us?" asked Purna and Suraj.

But the ghoul was in no mood to answer them. He flew and disappeared.

The two friends looked at each other and heaved sighs of disappointment.

Next day, as they happened to pass by the goldsmith's house, they saw the little boy.

"Hello boy, why did you laugh yesterday?" they asked.

"If you give your ghoul a set of silver teeth, do you hope that it will still serve you? Won't it go away to show it to the other ghouls?" said the boy. The two friends nodded sadly.

"Who is a political commentator?"

"A fellow who predicts what will happen and then can explain why it did not happen."

"Who is an economist?"

"A fellow who knows all about money but hasn't any."

"Who is an electrician?"

"A man who wires for money."



TOWARDS BETTER ENGLISH

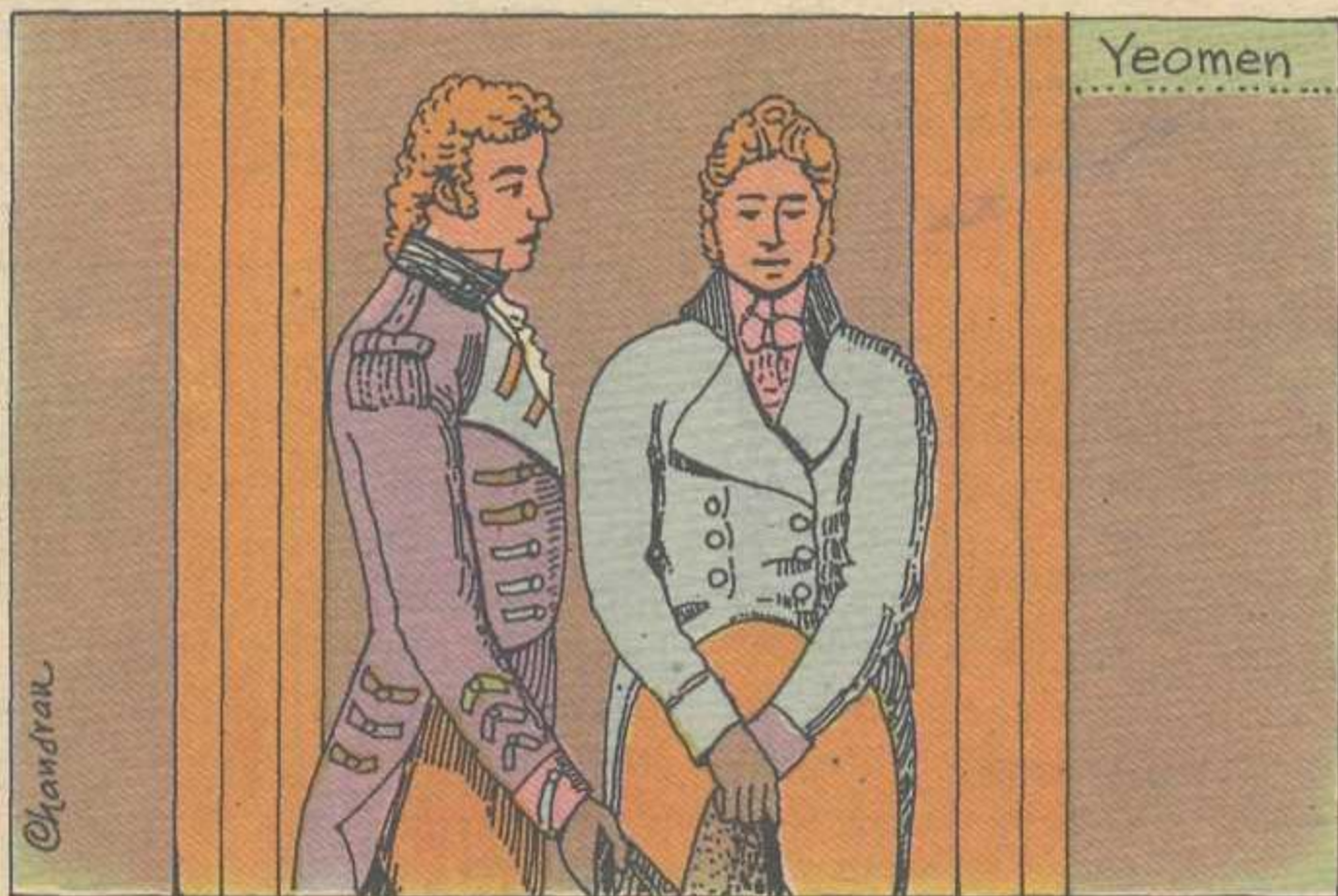
YEOMAN'S SERVICE

What does the expression 'Yeoman's service' mean? asks Santosh Kumar Behera of Narsingpur.

Gentlemen serving in royal households in ancient England were called yeomen. They held a special rank and were considered close to the king in times of war. Victories always resulted in their receiving favours from the king. They were famous for their bravery and honesty. Sometimes even a single act earned the epithet 'yeoman's service'. Nowadays, especially on the death of a great personality, his yeoman's service to the country (or a cause) is remembered or recalled in obituaries.

Bani Chakraborty of Dombivli wants to know, who are "strange bedfellows."

Bedfellows, simply, share the same bed and thus become colleagues. But it is *misery* or adversity that *makes strange bedfellows*. In his play *Tempest*, Shakespeare says: "My best way is to creep under his gaberdine; there is no other shelter hereabout; misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows." One-time deadly enemies thus become sworn allies against a common enemy.





VEER HANUMAN

8

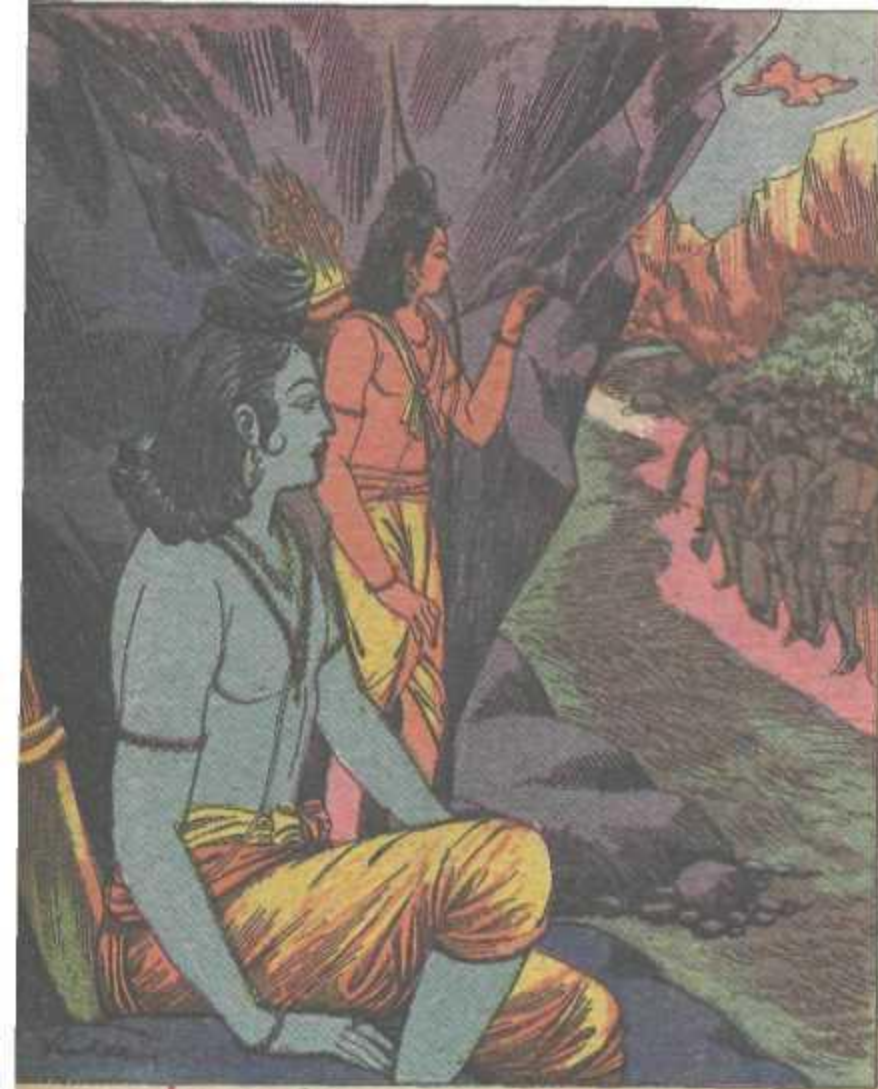
Sugriva hesitates to face an enraged Lakshmana, and sends Tara to pacify him. Lakshmana reminds him of his indebtedness to Rama. Sugriva accompanies Lakshmana to meet Rama. The Vanaras arrive and receive instructions from Sugriva.

Sugriva had no doubt that Hanuman was the most capable of all his lieutenants. "O great Hanuman! You can conquer earth, air, water, as well as the sky. There's hardly a forest, hill, or ocean unfamiliar to you. You can be as fast as the wind. There's none on earth who can rival you in strength. I depend

entirely on you in our mission to search for Sita Devi."

Rama, who was listening to Sugriva's praise of Hanuman, naturally looked upon him as an able ally. He removed his ring with his name engraved on it and, handing it over to Hanuman, said, "O hero of heroes! Show this to Sita when you find her,

HOPE FROM SOUTH



and the ring would dispel any doubt that she might have. It would assure her that you are my emissary. I have a feeling that you would bring us the success that we desire!"

Hanuman took the ring from Rama with reverence and prostrated before him. When he got up, Rama hugged him and said, "O Hanuman, need I say how much I depend on you? Come soon, but with glad tidings."

The Vanaras scattered in all directions. They were given a month's time to achieve their mission and come back.

After the search parties had

been duly despatched, Rama and Lakshmana rested in a cave on Mount Prastravana, anxiously awaiting their return. Sugriva was happy that he had discharged the first part of his duty.

The party that went to the east was led by Vinata, and that to the west by Sushena. A third group went northward. Hanuman, Tar, and Angada were among those who marched towards the south.

Each of the search parties did all they could to trace Sita Devi. River or lake, forest or hill, they combed every nook and corner. No place was left out. At the end of the day, they would spend the night together and discuss their course of action for the morrow. A month was about to pass thus, and they were nowhere near success. Those who had gone to the east, west, and north returned to Mount Prastravana to report their failure to Sugriva who remained with Rama and Lakshmana.

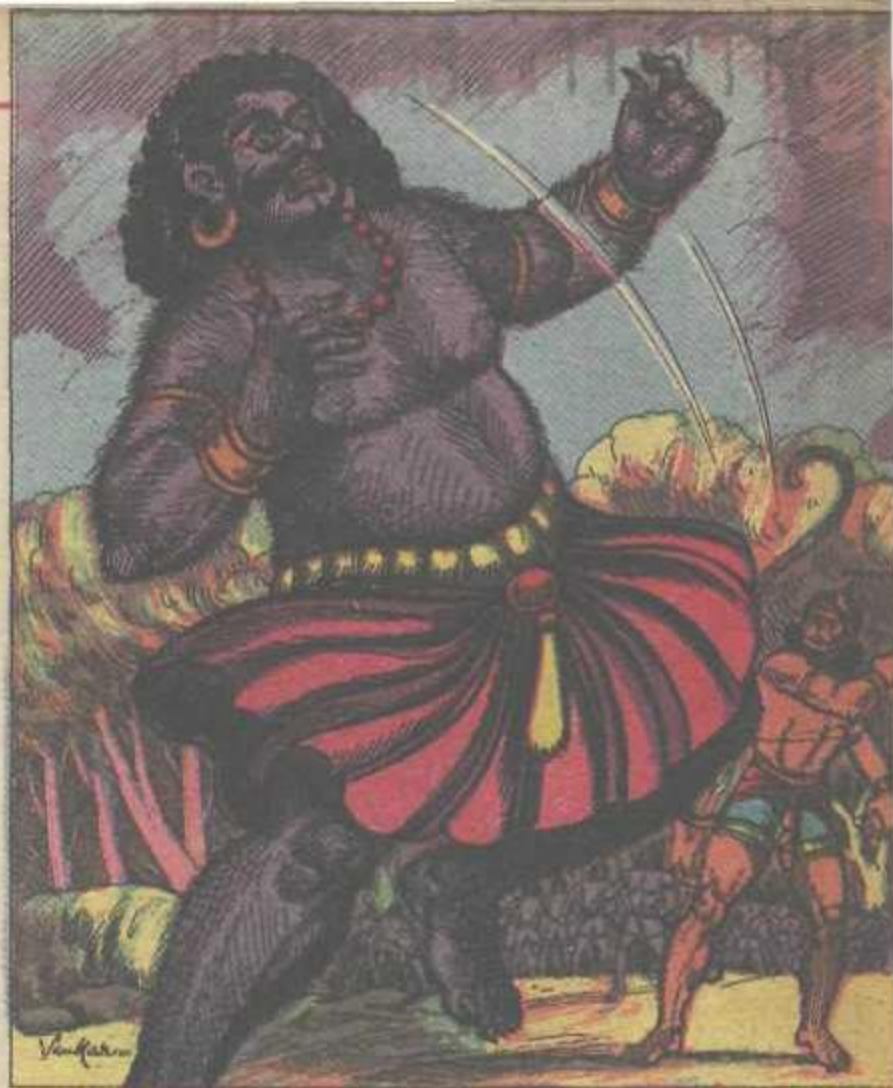
But the three did not give up hope, for, the party that had gone south was yet to return. From whatever information they had gathered, they had concluded that Ravana had proceeded southward with Sita.

Meanwhile, Hanuman's party reached Vidyachala. It was a vast area dotted with innumerable hills, forests, and rivers. The forests abounded in various fruits, and the Vanaras made good use of them.

One day they came upon an area looking almost like a desert. Evidently, the rivers had dried up, and not a single bird or animal could be seen. Let alone any tree, not even a blade of grass could be found there.

The Vanaras were perhaps not aware that once upon a time, a great rishi had lived there. Kandu enjoyed spiritual powers. At the same time, he was very short-tempered. His sixteen-year-old son died all of a sudden, and the rishi became so angry that he cursed the forest, reducing it to a desert.

Though a desert, the Vanaras made a thorough search of the place. As they moved further, they entered a deep forest where they encountered a ferocious demon. He yelled at them. "You puny creatures, I shall swallow you one by one at my leisure! Now don't try to run away, that'll be in vain. Surely, it's the god of Death who has brought you to me!"

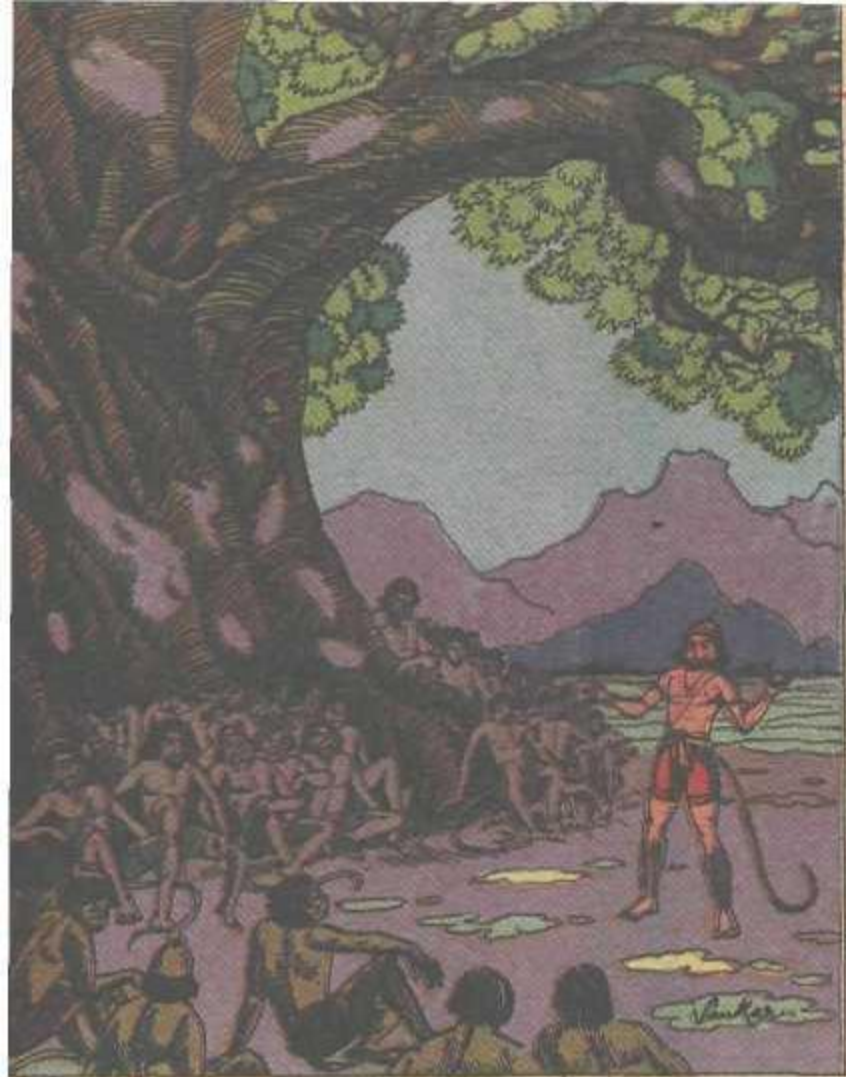


This demon could very well be Ravana, thought Angada. In the twinkling of an eye, he struck him a hard blow, which was enough to kill him.

The Vanaras were elated. They were under the impression that they had killed Ravana, and so could now easily search for Sita Devi in the caves nearby. However, a thorough search of the forest was in vain. Sita Devi was nowhere there.

Disheartened, the tired Vanaras gathered under a tree. Angada addressed them:

"For long we have searched the forests, hills, rivers, and the caves. We have left out no place.



Yet we haven't succeeded in getting at Ravana or rescuing Sita Devi. You all know how ruthless a task-master Sugriva is. Before we go back to report our failure to him, we would better make one more effort to find Sita Devi. Friends, let's not relax anymore."

Gandhamadan supported Angada's views and goaded the Vanaras to action. Accordingly, they dispersed throughout Vidyachala to resume their search. Vidyachala was a fairly large province, and by the time they were through with every portion, the time allotted by Sugriva was coming to an end.

They were now desperate, but remained a determined lot. Especially Hanuman, Gaja, Gabaksha, Gabaya, Sharava, Maind, Dwividha, Jambavan, Nala, Angada and Tar.

Suddenly, they came upon a hitherto unfamiliar place with a tunnel. Its mouth was covered by creepers and bushes, so much so it appeared almost inaccessible. The Vanaras were tired and hungry, and awfully thirsty, too. They had looked for water everywhere, but could not find any. However, they saw a number of birds, like herons and geese, coming out of the tunnel.

Surprised, the Vanaras approached the tunnel. Hanuman, who had a better knowledge of places than anyone else, said, "Looking at these birds and the growing creepers, it appears there is water inside. Let's go in and find out. We'll quench our thirst first and then continue the search."

They found the cave quite dark. They wondered where it led. As they advanced further they saw the inside lighting up. Soon they reached a beautiful spot, marked by a variety of trees full of flowers and fruits. They were amazed when they saw a



pond in which golden lotuses bloomed and golden fish played.

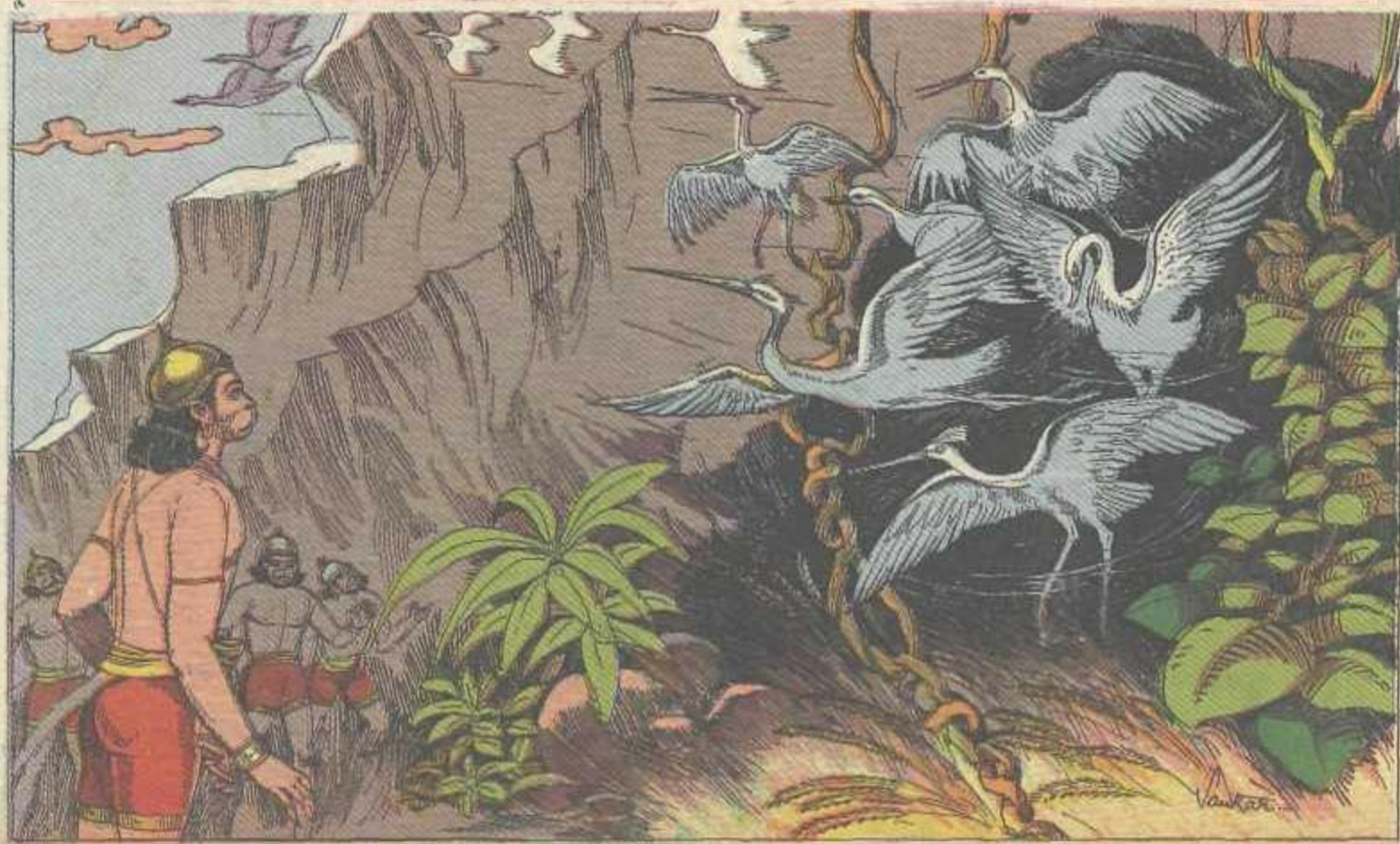
On one side of the pond stood a magnificent building studded with jewels. As they wandered, the Vanaras found all over shining vessels filled with honey, sandalwood paste, incense, and precious things. The place belonged to someone very rich, they concluded.

Soon, the Vanaras came across a woman. Clad in deer-skin, she was sitting in meditation. She looked resplendent, yet holy.

Hanuman greeted her with folded hands. "Mother, could you tell us where we are?" He then introduced himself and his companions and said, "We had

been walking for long and were thirsty. In search of water, we entered this tunnel. But what we see here bewilders us."

"Please make yourselves comfortable," said the woman, "and I shall explain. This tunnel was dug long ago by Maya, the architect with the realm of demons. The building here and the pond, in fact all that you see were made by him by magic. He had once pleased Brahma by his penance and was blessed with wealth. Maya lived here with a heavenly nymph named Hema. Lord Indra once got angry with him, and destroyed him with a clap of thunder. After Maya's death, Brahma gave everything



to Hema. I'm Swayamprabha, Hema's friend and the daughter of Meru Savarni. I stay here for the sake of Hema, taking care of her wealth. Hema, by the way, is an expert in music and dance; she also possesses great powers. She has given me the boon that none can ever defeat me. Now, do tell me, what has brought you here? Before you answer my questions, you may all eat the fruits from these trees and drink from the pond and relax for a while."

After the Vanaras had eaten and relaxed, Hanuman narrated to her the purpose of their visit, adding, "We're deeply grateful to you, Mother, for saving us from starvation. In what way can we repay your kindness?"

"You need not think of repaying anything. I'm only happy I've been of some service to you," replied Swayamprabha.

Hanuman bowed to her. "Mother, now please tell us how to go out of the tunnel, so that we can continue our search for Sita Devi. The time given to us is already over, and we've to report back to our king."

"I shall lead you out of the tunnel by my supernatural power. Now all of you close your eyes," instructed Swayamprabha.

The Vanaras closed their eyes. In the next moment, they found themselves outside the tunnel, flanked by a mountain and a vast ocean.

Swayamprabha blessed them: "May you succeed in your mission!"

The Vanaras remained there with folded hands till she disappeared inside the tunnel.

—To continue





Vikram and the Vampire

THE POET'S ENVY

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Gusts of wind shook the trees. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits. Flashes of lightning showed fearful faces.

But King Vikram did not swerve a bit. He climbed the ancient tree once again and brought the corpse down. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the corpse lying on his shoulder, the vampire that possessed the corpse spoke, "O king, your valour is to be highly appreciated. I do not know what your goal is. But for achieving it, you have forgotten your kingly comforts; you are risking your life. Very few can do this. But are you sure you can keep up your spirit forever? Let me tell you the story of Kaviraj. You then will understand why I ask



the boy would have already attended to it promptly. Kaviraj often mentioned this to his friends, and some of them even tried to entice him with a better salary if he went to work for them. But Govinda refused to leave the service of the royal poet, to whom he remained very loyal. He secretly admired the poet's erudition and imbibed his way of talking, trying to copy his master in every possible way. Whenever he had any doubts, he used to get them cleared and clarified from Kaviraj, who appreciated the boy's love for language and literature.

One day, Kaviraj fell ill and wanted to send word to the king that he would not attend the durbar. He called Govinda and asked him to tell the king, "It's new moon for the nightingale." This was an allusion to the infatuation the nightingale has for the moon. Naturally the bird would brood over the dark night of the new moon!

Govinda promptly went to the king. "I've this message from my master: 'O nightingale, it's new moon for you'."

The king understood the cryptic message and said, "You may

such a question. Pay attention to my narration, for it might change your attitude.". The vampire then told him the following story:

Kaviraj was the durbar poet of Bhuvanagiri. The king was very fond of him, as Kaviraj had a way of talking and the king admired his poetic language, facile expression, and correct choice of words. In fact, the king would spend some time every day in the company of Kaviraj.

He had a servant called Govinda. Alert about his master's needs; he never waited for orders. Before Kaviraj could think of some chore for Govinda,

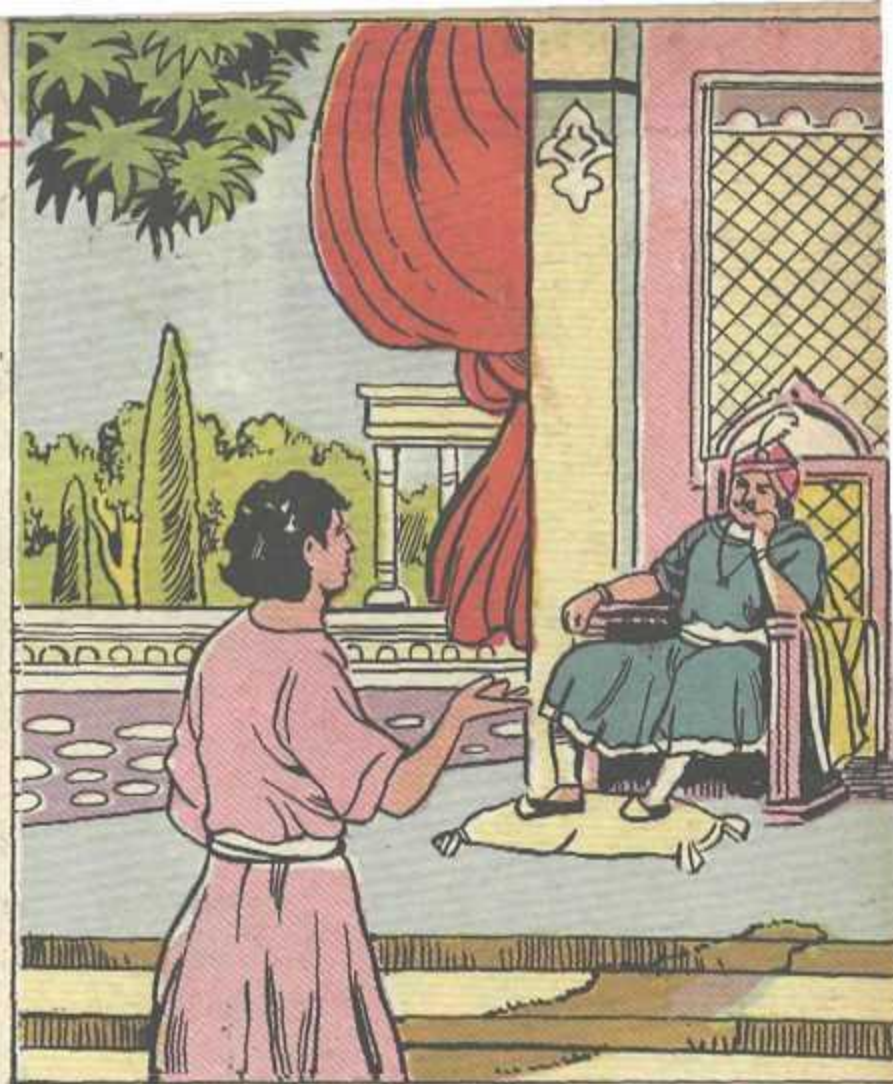
tell Moon that I am satisfied."

Govinda nodded as he guessed what the king meant and glanced at the others in the court as if to show off. On seeing this, the king was slightly put out. He pulled up Govinda. "What did you understand when I said I'm satisfied?"

Govinda coolly replied, "Of course, I could realise that you're very selfish!" And he said this to the hearing of everybody in the court.

No wonder the king was upset and very angry with Govinda. "A mere servant of the poet, you're trying to pose as a pundit, aren't you? Take it from me, you don't have a wee bit of knowledge and in your false pride, you dared to call me selfish. Tell me here and now, what's the real meaning of my message for Kaviraj? If you fail to answer, you can be sure of spending the rest of your life in prison!"

Govinda was now full of apologies. He sought the king's pardon and explained, "Sire, you are totally unconcerned about the dark night today and think of only the moon that may appear tomorrow. Hence my assumption that you're selfish. Please forgive me if my assumption is



wrong."

The king was fully satisfied with Govinda's explanation. "You're a servant fit enough for a royal poet. You were meeting me for the first time. Still, you did not have any hesitation to talk to me. I'm pleased."

To which Govinda responded thus: "One day he may also become king. Still, this hand will always remain my right hand. So, why should I be afraid?"

The king was intrigued. He could not get at what Govinda was implying. "Tell me, what exactly do you mean?"

"You're the real king," Govinda



tried to clarify, "but there is a likelihood of my master also becoming the king. Then my right hand with which I serve my master, too, will get a promotion!"

Now the king was able to decipher what Govinda was trying to convey to him. After all, didn't he call Kaviraj the moon? And the word moon also means king! The king made out that Govinda was no mere servant; he must have been learning a lot from the poet. He sent back Govinda with lots of gifts. "You can also be a lamp on a new moon night. I shall henceforth

look forward to your visits to the court."

Kaviraj was waiting for Govinda all the while. He listened all that his servant had to tell him. He was angry with Govinda. "You forgot that you are my servant and tried to pose as a learned person like me. You dared to retort to the king himself. What audacity! You're dismissed from my service. You may go!"

Govinda fell at his master's feet. "Please forgive me. In future, I shall not speak like that, to anyone, without your leave. I implore you, please don't send me away!"

Kaviraj took pity on Govinda as soon as he realised that he was too quick in finding fault with his servant. After all, he had himself sent him to the king. "All right, you should not speak to anyone without my permission. And don't pose as a pundit. There's a lot more to learn; see that there is no recurrence of such behaviour."

The poet was indisposed for the next day, too, and Kaviraj sent word with another servant. The king enquired with him why Govinda had not turned up, and



the servant promptly reported this to Kaviraj. He felt jealous of Govinda.

It was after another three or four days that Kaviraj was able to be present at the court. He looked weak and tired. But strangely, the king did not ask him anything about his illness. "What happened to Govinda? I missed him all these days."

Kaviraj tried to hide his envy for his servant and merely said, "When you stand by the sandalwood tree, why should you search for anybody who has merely smeared sandal paste all over his body?"

The king was amazed at the way the poet answered his query. "It's the sandal paste that brings fame to the tree," the king reminded Kaviraj. "I'm glad you came to see me, though I find you have not completely recovered from your illness."

Kaviraj was fuming within. He did not prolong the conversation, but took leave of the king and hurried home. He called Govinda to his side. "I could not till now assess your worth and did not realise how scholarly you are. Today, I consider you as my equal. I must have hurt you with



my behaviour. You must forgive me."

The vampire concluded his narration, and turning to King Vikram challenged him to answer him: "O king, it's a fact that Kaviraj was the greatest scholar in the royal court, and most respected, too. How can such a person seek forgiveness of his servant? It's also true that Kaviraj was jealous of Govinda. That was because the king had praised him. But, that was only known to the two of them, and no one else. If that be the case, why did Kaviraj was Govinda to forgive him? Answer me, if you



can, but should you keep mum despite your learning, your head will blow off from your body!"

King Vikramaditya pondered for a while and said, "It is not correct to say that Kaviraj's jealousy for Govinda was unknown to others. At least the king must have guessed the reason why Kaviraj chose not to send Govinda with his messages. That's how the king referred to the poet's illness,

and his presence in the court before he had fully recovered. The king was implying that he was too ill with jealousy. The poet got the king's point and was prompted to apologise to his servant. There was nothing wrong about it."

The vampire felt that he had been defeated in his game and gave the king the slip once again, along with the corpse lying on Vikram's shoulders.

FATE OF THE SONG

Mother : Did our son sing a popular song at the function?

Father : Well, the song used to be popular. I don't know its status after he sang it.



REF SENT OFF!



IN 1930, DURING A MATCH BETWEEN SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY AND GLASGOW, THE REFEREE WAS SENT OFF! SHEFFIELD WERE PLAYING IN WHITE SHIRTS AND BLACK SHORTS THE SHEFFIELD CAPTAIN FOUND HIMSELF PASSING TO THE REFEREE WHO WAS WEARING A WHITE SHIRT BUT NO JACKET. THE REFEREE WAS ASKED TO LEAVE AND DON A BLACK JACKET, WHICH HE DID.

LONGEST SWIMMING RACE

THE FIRST MAN TO COMPLETE THE 60-MILE LAKE MICHIGAN SWIM, THE LONGEST OPEN-WATER RACE, WAS EGYPTIAN ABDEL-LATIF ABO-HEIF IN 1963.



A BOXER'S HANDS

BEFORE A CONTEST, A BOXER'S HANDS ARE COVERED WITH 12 FEET OF SOFT 2 INCH BANDAGE. TAPE IS THEN APPLIED, BUT NOT OVER THE KNUCKLES. THE HANDS ARE THEN INSPECTED BY AN OFFICIAL.



A COSTLY GIFT FROM THE KING

The king had been to the forest for hunting. He was thirsty. Close to the forest there was a hut. He knocked on the door. A poor woodcutter opened the door. Imagine his surprise when he saw the king standing before him. He stammered and managed to say, "Welcome, my lord!"

The woodcutter's wife spread a deerskin on the floor. The king sat down and asked for some water to drink. The woodcutter's wife brought the water, but she also brought some boiled sweet potato. "My lord, you may have a bite or two of this if you so please," she said with great affection. "This will be at least something different from the royal dishes!" she added.

The king enjoyed the sweet potato very much. He said, "Believe me, my sister, this tastes wonderful. You must serve me this once again when I come here

next."

The king took leave of the couple. A full year passed. But the king had no time to visit the forest again. One day the woodcutter was setting out for the town on business. His wife gave him a parcel of boiled sweet potato and said, "Give this to the king. He had relished it, after all!"

The woodcutter was not sure if he would get admittance to the king's presence or if he should present such a poor gift to the king. He ate up most of the sweet potato sticks as he felt hungry on the way. Only the biggest one was left.

He loitered in front of the palace. "What do you want? What are you holding?" asked the guards. "I want to see the king—to present him with a sweet potato—very carefully boiled," he said nervously.

"What! To present a sweet potato—very carefully boiled—to the king!" repeated the guards loudly, bursting into a laughter.

Just then a landlord, who was notorious for his greed, was dismounting from his horse. He heard the conversation. He too laughed and going to the king, said, "My lord, do you know a joke? A rustic chap brings a sweet potato and claims that it is very carefully boiled for you!" The landlord laughed and the courtiers joined him. "Must be a madcap!" commented someone.

But the king at once remembered the woodcutter. He asked a courtier to rush out and usher in the man. Thus the woodcutter found access to the king.

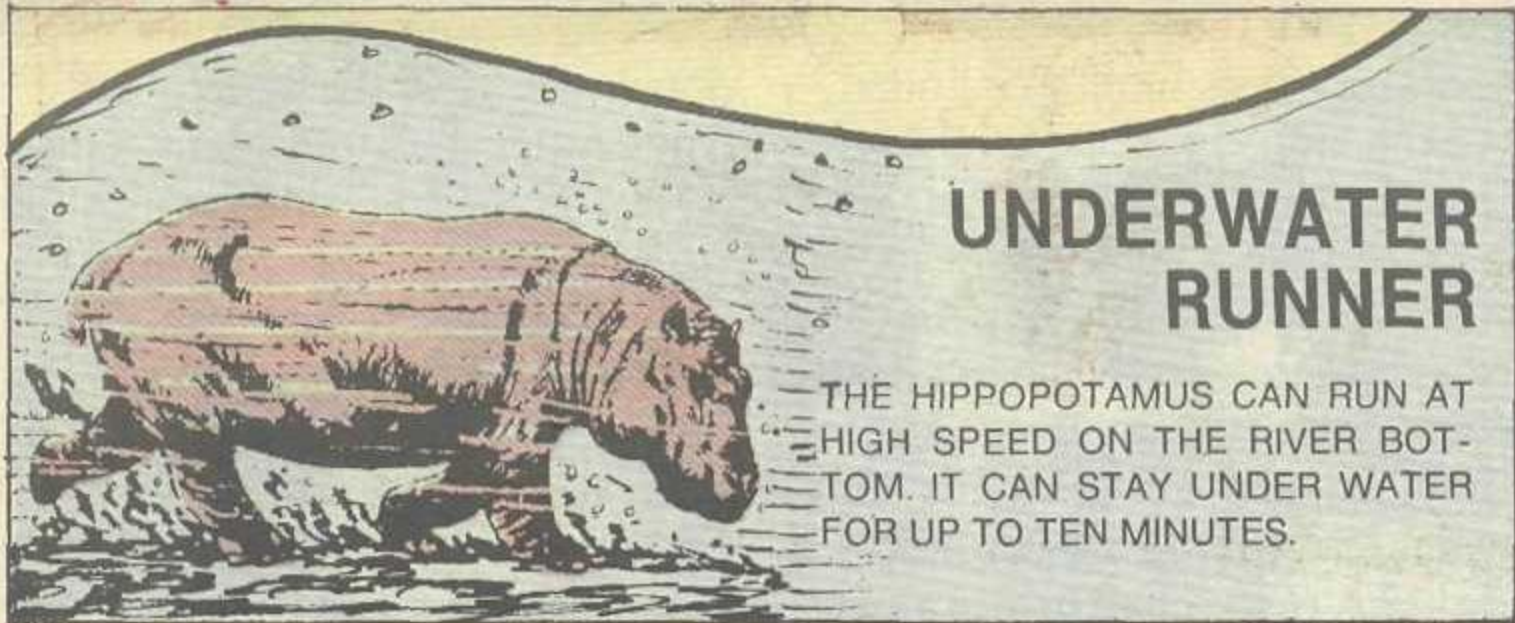
The king stood up and embraced him like a friend. He received the sweet potato with gratefulness and kept it beside him. He asked his treasurer to

fetch a thousand gold coins in a pouch. He gave the pouch to the woodcutter and told him, "This is for my sister and yourself. Now, take rest in our guest-house. You must dine with me."

The woodcutter was led to the royal guest-house. Suddenly an idea struck the landlord. He understood that the king was in a mood to give gifts. He went out and brought his handsome horse in and said, "My lord, this is a gift for you." The landlord was wondering how much the king would give him for such a precious present.

The king smiled and said, "Thank you. I accept the horse. And here is my gift to you." He handed over the sweet potato to him and said again, "You know very well how costly it is! I got it for a thousand gold coins! So, take half of it and leave the other half for me."





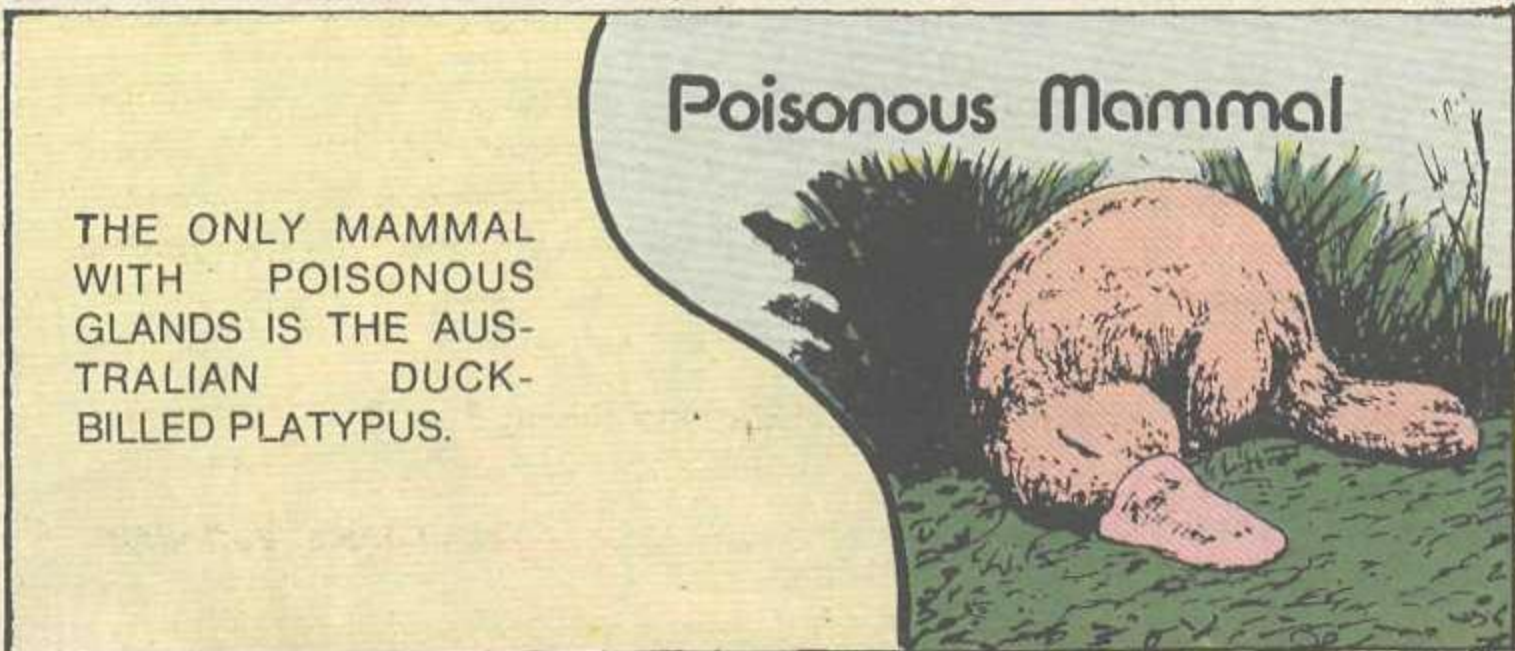
UNDERWATER RUNNER

THE HIPPOPOTAMUS CAN RUN AT HIGH SPEED ON THE RIVER BOTTOM. IT CAN STAY UNDER WATER FOR UP TO TEN MINUTES.



LARGEST FLYING CREATURE

THE LARGEST EVER FLYING CREATURE WAS THE PTEROSAUR, QUETZALCOATLUS NORTHROPI, WHICH LIVED 65 MILLION YEARS AGO. ITS REMAINS WERE DISCOVERED IN TEXAS IN 1974. ITS WING SPAN MEASURED ABOUT 50FT (15.24M), AND IT WEIGHED 190 LB (86KG).



Poisonous Mammal

THE ONLY MAMMAL WITH POISONOUS GLANDS IS THE AUSTRALIAN DUCK-BILLED PLATYPUS.



I don't understand whether Chandigarh is the capital of Punjab or of Haryana.

—V. Narayanan, Bombay.

Chandigarh is the capital of both Punjab and Haryana. The city, by itself, is a Union Territory.

How many Universities are there in India?

—Geeta Bishwas, Patna.

Till the end of 1989, India had 189 Universities.

What is the difference between Sahitya Akademi and State Sahitya Akademi?

—Aditya Nath, Nagpur.

The Sahitya Akademi, with its headquarters in New Delhi, is the national academy of letters. Its scope of activities embraces literatures in all the Indian languages. Some states have their own Akademies, to promote the regional literature of the states, in addition to what the national Sahitya Akademi does for them.

Which country is known as "the Land of the Rising Sun"?

—Vismit Joshi, Vadodara.

Japan

63

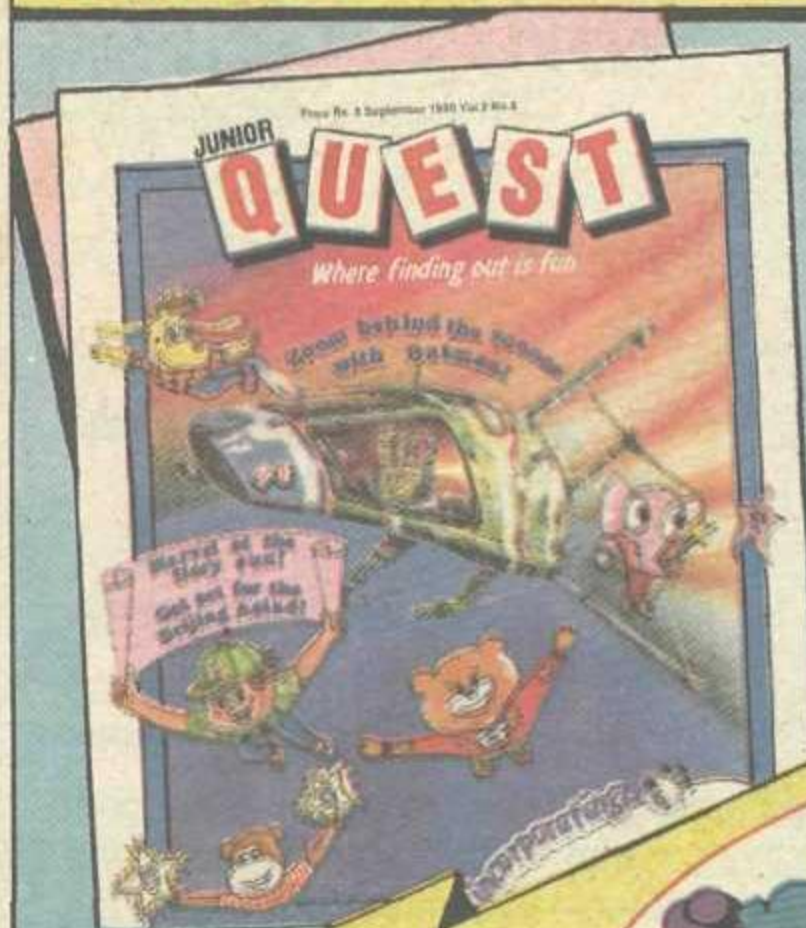


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PICKS FROM THE WISE

No one reaches an high position without daring.

—Syrus

It is always darkest just before the day dawneth.

—Thomas Fuller

A healthy body is a guest-chamber for the soul; a sick body is a prison.

—Bacon

65



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